

Stories From
Great Literature

STORY HOUR SERIES

SELECTED AUTHORS

Stories from Great Literature

Selected Authors

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Stories of Great Lives

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Memory and Her Beautiful Daughters

(The *Theogony* of Hesiod-800 B.C.)

One might suppose that a great king sitting on a throne high up among the clouds ruling the world must have everything that heart could wish. Just think how grand one would feel to throw the lightning from cloud to cloud and send the thunder rolling through the sky. Firecrackers and sky-rockets would seem quite tame after that.

King Zeus grew very tired of it sometimes. He had it in his power to make the earth glad with warm sunshine, but he grew tired of that, too. He could make the earth dreary and sad with frost and cold. He could crush giants under great rocks, and rule over the gods, and banquet on nectar and ambrosia, but he became weary of all these things. And the reason why he grew tired was that he kept thinking all the time about the events that were taking place just before him.

He looked down on the earth and saw men quarreling with one another and he thought about that. His wife, Juno, teased him, and he thought about that. His fellow gods on Mount Olympus played tricks on him and he played tricks on them and all was vexation. It is no wonder he wearied of looking at and thinking of what was going on just around him.

He wished that he might remember the beautiful things of the past and that he might know the good things that would happen after awhile, so he made a mighty wish in his heart and this is what it was.

He wished that there would come to him some lovely daughters who would dance about him and keep him thinking of the beautiful things which had happened long ago, so that he would forget his troubles. And he wanted them to sing of the wonderful things that were going to happen some time in the future.

After awhile it all happened just as he desired. There came a beautiful goddess, whose name was Memory, leading nine grown-up daughters to him that they might please him by causing him to think of the pleasant things of the past and to anticipate the pleasures of the future.

King Zeus was so happy when he saw the pretty maidens before him that he forgot to think of the quarrels on earth and other disagreeable matters. He could do nothing but admire his daughters and tell them how glad he was that they had come to him. They danced before him and sang songs to him and he gave them a whole mountain for their home, and there they lived, bathing in the violet-tinted fountains, and dancing around the altar which was sacred to their father.

They burnt incense to Zeus on this altar and they taught people to sing songs praising him. There was a beautiful flying horse which came to their home on the top of this mountain. Once, when it was very thirsty, it struck the side of the mountain with its hoof, and a fountain of clear cold water sprang up, so that the winged horse could drink.

The nine daughters of King Zeus used to pet the flying horse and give him delicious food and he was not afraid of them. He was a gentle creature and flew away from cross and ugly people, but he came to poets and musicians. They never tried to yoke him down to a plough to do dirty work, but gave him pleasant burdens to bear. He often carried their music up to Mount Olympus. So it is no wonder that the nine daughters of Zeus loved him.

It was wonderful the comfort Zeus took in his pretty daughters. When he saw that they were wise and good and could drive away cares, he gave them the power to shed honeyed dew upon the lips of all babies who were going to grow up and become kings or wise men. This was a greater gift to any babe than to give him gold or silver, for he was sure to speak gentle words and make wise laws.

And Zeus gave the power also to his daughters to take sorrow out of the heart and make all sad people forget their troubles. I do not suppose you quite believe my story, but perhaps if you will stop to think how dreadful it would be to forget all your kind friends and all the pleasant things that have happened to you, you may agree with me that Memory has beautiful daughters.

And perhaps you will want to learn many poems and stories while you are very young, so that you can think of them when you grow older and get tired of daily storm-clouds and everyday cares.

The Gift of Poesy

(*The Ramayana* of India)

There was once a learned man named Valmiki who loved God and his fellow men; and he took up his abode in a wild and lonely forest that he might learn what was right by thinking. Just as a traveler climbs a mountain to get a view of the whole country about him that he need not go astray, so did Valmiki seek the temple of nature that by thinking over all he had met and seen, he should know people better and be able to serve them more acceptably.

The forest where he dwelt was very beautiful. There were lofty tamarind and mango trees where birds of a thousand hues flashed to and fro, and the ground was strewn with rich blossoms whose incense perfumed the air.

Here Valmiki lived all alone for many years praising the great Creator and contemplating how it might best come about that all men should be taught the universal brotherhood of all living creatures.

The inhabitants of the woods learned to love the kind man who lived on roots and berries, and after awhile they came to him when they were in trouble. Even the timid gazelles which came in flocks to the stream to quench their thirst would look up into his face as much as to say, "We wish you good evening, Valmiki."

The glow-worm and the fire- fly shed their lights around him in the dark lest he should tread upon a poisonous plant or serpent, and the tigers and other beasts crept out of sight. At the sound of his steps the flowers opened their corollas and smiled, saying, "Are you ill, Valmiki? There is a healing power for you in my root."

At length as Valmiki sat at the door of his hut one evening, there came the messenger of the gods and said to him, "If men learn to love the great universal nature, if they learn to love the good and the true, it must be through hearing stories of heroic lives; is this not so, Valmiki?"

"Not so," said Valmiki; "if man learn to be truly noble, he must have one great hero to follow, one who, although poor and weak and suffering, has done generously and well, endured sorrow without bitterness, controlled his passions, dealt kindly with all living creatures. One such example man needs — to follow."

"There is such a hero," said the messenger, "but what poet is there who is great enough to tell his virtues to the people in a poem which all men shall love to read, — a poem so great that men shall believe it and shall seek to follow the life of the hero?"

"I charge you, Valmiki," said the messenger of the gods, "by your love of man, never rest until you have discovered this poet." With this the heavenly messenger returned to his celestial home. Then Valmiki was sorely troubled and said to himself, "How shall I find such a poet in this solitary forest? To be clean and pure is the great wisdom. I will bathe my body in the water and keep my soul pure, and perhaps the great God will give me clear perception that I may find the gifted poet, worthy to write the song of the hero."

So saying, the hermit prepared to bathe himself in the river, but as he lingered on the brink, he beheld on the opposite shore two herons of surpassingly beautiful plumage. It was the season when the buds are bursting forth from the trees and all Nature thrills with love. There is at this time more beauty in the world; all living things are radiant with ardor; the colors of the trees and flowers are of a richer dye, and the birds break forth into song.

"We thank Thee, O Supreme Author of life!" exclaimed these herons of marvelous plumage, "for the gift of lustrous

waters, for the wings which give us empire over the realms of air, and above all for the love which we find in each other."

But while these harmless birds expressed joyously their thanksgiving, the arrow of some pitiless hunter hissed through the startled air, and, piercing the poor breast of one of the winged lovers, destroyed the life that had just reached its happiest moment. Then the mournful shrieks of the bereaved heron, which beheld his innocent mate stretched there dabbled in blood, saddened the shores of the lake and saddened, too, the kind heart of the hermit. "O cruel hunter!" he cried, "mayst thou attain no glory in the eternal revolution of years, since thou hast not feared to strike this heron in its supreme happiness."

As the bubbling springs gush from the soil, so leapt the words from his heart. And as the sound of flowing waters mellows itself into harmony, so did his grief for the desolate bird sing itself into measure, swaying his thoughts to and fro with a musical, dreamy movement, as the breeze blows forward and back the boughs of the sad weeping-willow.

The rhythm of his lamentations rang in his ears while he bathed in the limpid waters, and even when he had left the crystal lake the enchanting measure still haunted him. Against his will he kept repeating it over and over, until, sorely puzzled and distressed, he fancied that some charm had bewitched him.

That day the greatest of the gods came to visit the meek hermit. Valmiki reverently bowed himself to the earth, his hands clasped above his head as is befitting the presence of one worthy of honor, and he begged the most illustrious of the gods to inform him of his pleasure.

Then Brahma, the god, said: "The fame of your wisdom and holiness has reached me, O Hermit! I long to hear you speak of virtue and knowledge, and of the grave contemplations that have absorbed your mind while you have lived in this forest." Valmiki tried to tell his illustrious guest of the way to encourage man to

become noble and generous and pure. But his tongue could only repeat the musical words in which he deplored the death of the heron.

Valmiki was abashed and confused and he trembled before the most ancient of the gods, fearing that Brahma would think that he meant to mock him. But the eternal Brahma smiled and said, "Happy art thou, Valmiki, who hast found favor in the sight of the ardent goddess of eloquence! The divine quality of pity has drawn to thee the kiss of the goddess of harmony. Up, then, oh man, who hath tasted an immortal's love, and speak forth the divine breath which inspires thee! Sing to the listening ages the wondrous story of the great hero whose beauty shall not fade till the stars grow dim in the sky."

Thus did Valmiki receive the divine gift of poesy in exchange for tears of pity, because there dwelt in his heart the feeling of universal brotherhood.

Atlantis, The Lost Island

(Plato's *Republic-The Critia*)

It often happens that some little boy says, "I wish I were rich," thinking that if he had a great deal of money he could buy, for his own enjoyment, all the toys and candies and good clothes that heart could desire. It is very easy to forget that "the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof," and that no one on the earth can be any richer than any other person, except by being more deeply in debt. It is easy to imagine that if we had money or lands they would be our own, but this must look quite absurd to Him who has lent us His goods for a few years to use as if they were our own, for the welfare of all.

It is quite certain that Plato believed that a man's true riches were in his Mind and not outside of him; that a man was rich who had the power to get money, and the power and will to use it well for others, — the ability and will being all the riches there were about it; and that that man was the richest of all who did not care for riches. Plato hoped to make his fellow citizens see that the love of money and a show of wealth were vulgar, so he told them the story of a lost island.

Long ages ago, the gods had the whole earth. Each one knew what was proper for himself to have, so no one tried to get more than was his share, and each one put as many people on his own land as could be happy there.

When the gods had peopled their districts, they tended human beings as good shepherds tend their flocks, not by driving them, or striking them, but like guides who go ahead to show the way. Each god loved his own people, and set his own kingdom in order.

Athena was the Goddess of Wisdom, and she loved learning and hard work. She knew how to spin and weave, and make wise laws, and conquer in battle. She chose for her subjects only brave people, and she put patriotism into their hearts, and gave them noble natures.

They did not care for riches, or desire to live in palaces, but they built small houses, in which they lived and grew old. They built splendid temples in which to worship, and fine public houses, for they loved the gods and their country better than they loved themselves. There were only twenty thousand of these people, but they were so strong that they could not be conquered by a million soldiers.

The god of the waters, Poseidon, had quite a different kingdom. He received for his portion the island of Atlantis, and he married Cleito, a mortal woman, and settled down in a pretty part of the island. On the side toward the sea, and in the centre of the island, there was a fertile plain which was very beautiful. There was a low mountain running across the island, about seven miles from the sea, and it kept off the cold north winds, so that the long south slope, where most of the people lived, was warm and pleasant. Poseidon loved Cleito so much that he resolved to surround her home with embankments and canals so high and deep that no other king could come and carry her off. So he broke the ground all round the hill on which she dwelt, making a high belt of earth in the form of a ring which encircled her, and outside of that was a ring of water, so wide that it looked like a sea. Then came another ring of land, and another ring of water, affording such a protection to the princess that no one could ever hear anything about her, and no ship could get into the rings of water, and no man could get to the island. Poseidon contrived to supply the island with fresh water by bringing up two streams from under the earth. He caused them to come up as fountains, one of warm water and one of

cold, and he made every variety of food to spring up from the earth.

Poseidon and Cleito had ten sons, five pairs of twins, and each son received a part of the kingdom as his own. The oldest son, Atlas, became king of the island, and named it after himself, Atlantis, and he gave the name to the Atlantic Ocean. He was a large, strong man, and it is said that he held up the sky and plucked the golden apples.

The people of the empire of Atlas became very rich. They brought many things from foreign countries. They dug gold and silver out of their mines. They cut valuable wood from their forests. They had elephants, and horses, and oxen, and all other kinds of tame animals and wild animals, every sort that can live in mountains or plains, or in lakes, marshes, rivers, canals, and ditches. And they had roots, and herbs, and flowers, and fruit, and everything to eat and drink in infinite abundance. They spent their time in building docks, and harbors, and bridges, and temples, and palaces, until everything was a marvel of luxury and beauty. They built a stone wall around one embankment, with towers and gates, and they covered the next one with tin, and the outer one with brass. They built a temple to Poseidon over six hundred feet long, and covered the pinnacles with silver and gold. They ornamented the roof with ivory, and gold, and silver, and lined the floor with a precious metal. In the temple they placed statues of gold. There was one of Poseidon himself standing in a chariot, driving six winged horses — it was of such a size that his head touched the roof. And around, it were a hundred water-nymphs riding on dolphins' backs. There were images and golden statues of kings and their wives; there were fountains, and trees, and cisterns, and the king's bath, and baths for women, and baths for men, and baths for horses and cattle; there were aqueducts, race-courses, guard- houses, naval stores, ships, and such a crowd of rich, elegant, lazy, proud people, charioteers, fighters, archers, slingers, stone-shooters,

skirmishers, pugilists, that it would be tiresome to mention them. The ten kings had absolute control of the city and country. They made the laws, and drove the people about like slaves, striking, punishing, and slaying any one whom they disliked. Now, to people who had no eyes to see the truth, these wretched folks still appeared glorious and blessed at the very time when they were filled with avarice and riches. But they began to appear base to those who had eyes to see truly. They had lost their most precious riches, they had been unable to bear up under good fortune, for their lower natures had become their masters. Then they began to look at the little kingdom ruled over by Athena, where the people loved hard work and virtue, and were very comfortable in poverty. And they saw that the divinity of their own natures had become diluted by being mixed with wealth.

So the god of Atlantis directed his great power against the little kingdom of Athena, and there the story ends, but it is easy enough to guess the rest of it; for the island of Atlantis, if there ever was one, has sunk beneath the sea.

It does not make a gram of difference whether there ever was an Atlantis or not. Plato's story was just as true as if he had said, "There will be a Roman Empire, which will fall because its people will love riches better than virtue."

The principle always holds. No nation can stand except through the uprightness and simplicity of its citizens.

When men are good and true, and stand shoulder to shoulder, a nation is strong; it is strong in its quality of life, and not in its lands or gold.

A thing is worth what it can do for you; not what you pay for it.

The wealth of a nation depends upon the number it can employ in making good and useful things.

Peace of heart, contentedness in simple employments, these are a nation's wealth.

Getting Ready for Adventures

(*Don Quixote* Told Anew for Children)

Many years ago there lived in Spain a very old-fashioned gentleman whom you would have been glad to know. This gentleman had so many odd ways and did so many strange things that he not only amused his neighbors and distressed his friends, but made himself famous throughout the world.

What his real name was, no one outside of his village seemed to know. Some said it was this, some said it was that; but his neighbors called him "the good Mr. Quixana," and no doubt this was correct.

He was gentle and kind, and very brave; and all who knew him loved him. He had neither wife nor child. He lived with his niece in his own farmhouse close by a quiet little village in the province of La Mancha.

His niece was not yet twenty years of age. So the house was kept and managed by an old servant woman who was more wrinkled than wise and more talkative than handsome. A poor man who lived in a cottage near by was employed to do the work on the farm; and he did so well that the master had much leisure time and was troubled but little with the cares of business.

Mr. Quixana was rather odd in his appearance and dress, as all old-fashioned gentlemen are apt to be.

He was more than fifty years of age, and quite tall and slender. His face was thin, his nose was long, his hair was turning gray.

He dressed very plainly. On week days he wore a coarse blouse and blue trousers of homespun stuff. On Sundays, however, he put on a plush coat and short velvet breeches and soft slippers with silver buckles.

In the hallway of his old-fashioned house a short, rusty sword was always hanging; and leaning against the wall were a rusty lance and a big rawhide shield. These weapons had belonged to his great-grandfather, long ago, when men knew but little about guns and gunpowder.

On the kitchen doorstep an old greyhound was always lying. This dog was very lean and slender, and his hunting days had long been past. But all old-fashioned gentlemen kept greyhounds in those days.

In the barn there was a horse as old and as lean as the greyhound. But of this horse I will tell you much more in the course of my story.

Like many other gentlemen, Mr. Quixana did not work much. He spent almost all his time in reading, reading, reading.

He was seldom seen without a book in his hand. When the weather was fine he would sit in his little library, or under the apple trees in his garden, and read all day.

He often forgot to come to his meals. He was so wrapped up in his books that he forgot his horse, his dog, and even his niece. He forgot his friends; he forgot himself. Sometimes he sat up and read all night.

Now, what kind of books do you suppose he read?

He read no histories nor books of travel. He cared nothing for poetry or philosophy. His whole mind was given to stories—stories of knights and their daring deeds.

He read so many of these stories that he could not think of anything else. His head was full of knights and knightly deeds, of magic and witchcraft, of tournaments and battlefields.

If he had read less, he would have been wiser; for much reading does not always improve the mind.

At length this old-fashioned gentleman said to himself, "Why should I always be a plain farmer and sit here at home? Why may I not become a famous knight?"

The more he thought about this matter the more he wished to be a hero like those of whom he had read in his books.

"Yes, I will be a knight," he said to himself. "My mind is fully made up. I will arm myself in a coat of mail, I will mount my noble steed, I will ride out into the world to seek adventures.

"No danger shall affright me. With my strong arm I will go forth to protect the weak and to befriend the friendless. Yes, I will be a knight, and I will fight against error wherever I find it."

So he began at once to get ready for his great undertaking.

The first thing to be done was to find some suitable armor. For what knight ever rode out into the world without being incased in steel?

In the garret of his house there was an old coat of mail. It had lain there among the dust and cobwebs for a hundred years and more. It was rusted and battered, and some of the parts were missing. It was a poor piece of work at the very best.

But he cleaned it as well as he could, and polished it with great care. He cut some pieces of pasteboard to supply the missing parts, and painted them to look like steel. When they were properly fitted, they answered very well, especially when no fighting was to be done.

With the coat of mail there was an old brass helmet. It, too, was broken, and the straps for holding it on were lost. But Mr. Quixana patched it up and found some green ribbons which served instead of straps. As he held it up and looked at it from every side, he felt very proud to think that his head would be adorned with so rare a piece of workmanship.

And now a steed must be provided; for every knight must needs have a noble horse.

The poor old creature in the barn was gaunt and thin and very bony; but he was just the stuff for a war horse, wiry and very stubborn. As the old-fashioned gentleman looked at him he fancied that no steed had ever been so beautiful or so swift.

"He will carry me most gallantly," he said, "and I shall be proud of him. But what shall I call him? A horse that is ridden by a noble knight must needs have an honorable and high-sounding name."

So he spent four days in studying what he should call his steed.

At last he said, "I have it. His name shall be Rozinante."

"And why do you give him that strange name?" asked the niece.

"I will tell you," he answered. "The word rozin means 'common horse,' and the word ante is good Latin for 'before' or 'formerly.' Now if I call my gallant steed 'Formerly-a-Common-Horse,' the meaning is plain; for everybody will understand that he is now no longer common, but very uncommon. Do you see? So his name shall be Rozinante."

Then he patted the horse lovingly, and gently repeated, "Rozinante! Rozinante!"

He thought that if he could only find as good a name for himself, he would feel like riding out and beginning his adventures at once. For what more could he need?

"Every knight," he said, "has the right to put Don at the beginning of his name; for that is a title of honor and respect. Now, I shall call myself Don—Don—Don something; but what shall it be?"

He studied this question for eight days. Then a happy thought came into his mind.

"I will call myself Don Quixote," he cried; "and since my home is in the district of La Mancha, I shall be known throughout the world as Don Quixote de la Mancha. What name is more noble than that? What title can be more honorable?"

The name was indeed not very different from his real name. For have we not said that his neighbors called him Quixana?

The good old gentleman had now mended and polished his armor and found new names for himself and his steed. He felt himself well equipped for adventures. But suddenly the thought came to him that still another thing must be settled before he could ride out and do battle as a real and true knight.

In all the stories he had read, every hero who was worthy of knighthood had claims to some fair lady whom he invoked in time of peril, and to whom he brought the prizes which he had won. It was at her feet that the knight must kneel at the end of every quest. It was from her that he must receive the victor's crown. To him, therefore, a lady friend was as necessary as a steed or a suit of armor.

Now Don Quixote was not acquainted with many ladies, but he felt that, as a knight, he must center his thoughts upon some one who would be his guiding star as he went faring through the world.

Who should it be?

This question troubled him more than any other had done. He sat in his house for two whole weeks, and thought of nothing else.

How would his niece do?

Well, she was very young, and he was her uncle. In all the books in his library there was no account of a knight kneeling at the feet of his own niece. She was not to be thought of.

As for his housekeeper, she was too old and homely. He could never think of doing homage to one in her humble station.

At length he remembered a handsome, red-cheeked maiden who lived in or near the village of Toboso. Her name was Adonza Lorenzo, and many years ago she had smiled at him as he was passing her on the road. He had not seen her since she had grown up, but she must now be the most charming of womankind. He fancied that no lady in the world was better fitted to receive his knightly homage.

"Adonza Lorenzo it shall be!" he cried, rubbing his hands together.

But what a name! How would it sound when coupled with that of the valorous Don Quixote de la Mancha? Surely it was too common, and she must have a title more like that of a princess. What should it be?

He studied over this for many days, and at last hit upon a name which pleased him much.

"It shall be Dulcinea," he cried. "It shall be Dulcinea del Toboso. No other name is so sweet, so harmonious, so like the lady herself."

Thus, after weeks of labor and study, Don Quixote de la Mancha at length felt himself prepared to ride forth into the world to seek adventures. He waited only for a suitable opportunity to put his cherished plans into execution.

The Adventure at the Inn

One morning in midsummer, Don Quixote arose very early, long before any one else was awake.

He put on his coat of mail and the old helmet which he had patched with pasteboard and green ribbons.

He took down the short sword that had been his great-grandfather's, and belted it to his side. He grasped his long lance. He swung the leather shield upon his shoulder.

Then he went out very quietly by the back door, lest he should awaken his niece or the housekeeper.

He went softly to the barn and saddled his steed. Then he mounted and rode silently away through the sleeping village and the quiet fields.

He was pleased to think how easily he had managed things. He was glad that he had gotten away from the house and the village without any unpleasant scenes.

"I trust that I shall presently meet with some worthy adventure," he said to himself.

But soon a dreadful thought came into his mind: He was not a knight, for no one had conferred that honor upon him; and the laws of chivalry would not permit him to contend in battle with any one of noble rank until he himself was knighted.

"Whoa, Rozinante!" he said. "I must consider this matter."

He stopped underneath a tree, and thought and thought. Must he give up his enterprise and return home?

"No, that I shall never do!" he cried. "I will ride onward, and the first worthy man that I meet shall make me knight."

So he spoke cheeringly to Rozinante and resumed his journey. He dropped the reins loosely upon the horse's neck, and allowed him to stroll hither and thither as he pleased.

"It is thus," he said, "that knights ride out upon their quests. They go where fortune and their steeds may carry them."

Thus, leisurely, he sat in the saddle, while Rozinante wandered in unfrequented paths, cropped the green herbage by the roadside, or rested himself in the shade of some friendly tree. The hours passed, but neither man nor beast took note of time or distance.

"We shall have an adventure by and by," said Don Quixote softly to himself.

The sun was just sinking in the west when Rozinante, in quest of sweeter grass, carried his master to the summit of a gentle hill. There, in the valley below him, Don Quixote beheld a little inn nestling snugly by the roadside.

"Ha!" he cried. "Did I not say that we should have an adventure?"

He gathered up the reins; he took his long lance in his hand; he struck spurs into his loitering steed, and charged down the hill with the speed of a plow horse.

He imagined that the inn was a great castle with four towers and a deep moat and a drawbridge.

At some distance from the gate he checked his steed and waited. He expected to see a dwarf come out on the wall of the castle and sound a trumpet to give notice of the arrival of a strange knight; for it was always so in the books which he had read.

But nobody came. Don Quixote grew impatient. At length he urged Rozinante forward at a gentle pace, and was soon within hailing distance of the inn. Just then a swineherd, in a field near by, blew his horn to call his pigs together.

"Ah, ha!" cried Don Quixote. "There is the dwarf at last. He is blowing his bugle to tell them that I am coming." And with the greatest joy in the world he rode onward to the door of the inn.

The innkeeper was both fat and jolly; and when he saw Don Quixote riding up, he went out to welcome him. He could not help laughing at the war-like appearance of his visitor — with his long lance, his battered shield, and his ancient coat of mail. But he kept as sober a face as possible and spoke very humbly.

"Sir Knight," he said, "will you honor me by alighting from your steed? I have no bed to offer you, but you shall have every other accommodation that you may ask."

Don Quixote still supposed that the inn was a castle; and he thought that the innkeeper must be the governor. So he answered in pompous tones:—

"Senior Castellano, anything is enough for me. I care for nothing but arms, and no bed is so sweet to me as the field of battle."

The innkeeper was much amused.

"You speak well, Sir Knight," he said. "Since your wants are so few, I can promise that you shall lack nothing. Alight, and enter!" And with that he went and held Don Quixote's stirrup while he dismounted.

The poor old man had eaten nothing all day. His armor was very heavy. He was stiff from riding so long. He could hardly stand on his feet. But with the innkeeper's help he was soon comfortably seated in the kitchen of the inn.

"I pray you, Senior Castellano," he said, "take good care of my steed. There is not a finer horse in the universe."

The innkeeper promised that the horse should lack nothing, and led him away to the stable.

When he returned to the kitchen he found Don Quixote pulling off his armor. He had relieved himself of the greater part of his coat of mail; but the helmet had been tied fast with the green ribbons, as I have told you, and it could not be taken off without cutting them.

"Never shall any one harm those ribbons," cried Don Quixote; and after vainly trying to untie them he was obliged to leave them as they were. It was a funny sight to see him sitting there with his head inclosed in the old patched-up helmet.

"Now, Sir Knight," said the innkeeper, "will you not deign to partake of a little food? It is quite past our supper time, and all our guests have eaten. But perhaps you will not object to taking a little refreshment alone."

"I will, indeed, take some with all my heart," answered Don Quixote. "I think I shall enjoy a few mouthfuls of food more than anything else in the world."

As ill luck would have it, it was Friday, and there was no meat in the house. There were only a few small pieces of salt fish in the pantry, and these had been picked over by the other guests.

"Will you try some of our fresh trout?" asked the landlord. "They are very small, but they are wholesome."

"Well," answered Don Quixote, "if there are, several of the small fry, I shall like them as well as a single large fish. But whatever you have, I pray you bring it quickly; for the heavy armor and the day's travel have given me a good appetite."

So a small table was set close by the door, for the sake of fresh air; and Don Quixote drew his chair up beside it.

Then the innkeeper brought some bits of the fish, ill-dressed and poorly cooked. The bread was as brown and moldy as Don Quixote's armor; and there was nothing to drink but cold water.

It was hard for the poor man to get the food to his mouth, for his helmet was much in his way. By using both hands, however, he managed to help himself. Then you would have laughed to see him eat; for, indeed, he was very hungry.

"No true knight will complain of that which is set before him," he said to himself.

Suddenly, however, the thought again came to him that he was not yet a knight. He stopped eating. The last poor morsel of fish was left untouched on the table before him. His appetite had left him.

"Alas! alas!" he groaned. "I cannot lawfully ride out on any adventure until I have been dubbed a knight. I must see to this business at once."

He arose and beckoned to the innkeeper to follow him to the barn.

"I have something to say to you," he whispered.

"Your steed, Sir Knight," said the innkeeper, "has already had his oats. I assure you he will be well taken care of."

"It is not of the steed that I wish to speak," answered Don Quixote; and he carefully shut the door behind them.

Then falling at the innkeeper's feet, he cried, "Sir, I shall never rise from this place till you have promised to grant the boon which I am about to beg of you."

The innkeeper did not know what to do. He tried to raise the poor man up, but he could not. At last he said, "I promise. Name the boon which you wish, and I will give it to you."

"Oh, noble sir," answered Don Quixote, "I knew you would not refuse me. The boon which I beg is this: Allow me to watch my armor in the chapel of your castle tonight, and then in the morning—oh, in the morning—"

"And what shall I do in the morning?" asked the innkeeper.

"Kind sir," he answered, "do this: Bestow on me the honor of knighthood. For I long to ride through every corner of the earth in quest of adventures; and this I cannot do until after I have been dubbed a knight."

The innkeeper smiled, and his eyes twinkled. For he was a right jolly fellow, and he saw that here was a chance for some merry sport.

"Certainly, certainly," he said, right kindly. "You are well worthy to be a knight, and I honor you for choosing so noble a calling. Arise, and I will do all that you ask of me."

"I thank you," said Don Quixote. "Now lead me to your chapel. I will watch my armor there, as many a true and worthy knight has done in the days of yore."

"I would gladly lead you thither," said the inn-keeper, but at the present time there is no chapel in my castle. It will do just as well, however, to watch your armor in some other convenient place. Many of the greatest knights have done this when there was no chapel to be found."

"Noble sir, I believe you are right," said Don Quixote. "I have read of their doing so. And since you have no chapel, I shall be content with any place."

"Then bring your armor into the courtyard of my castle," said the innkeeper. "Guard it bravely until morning, and at sunrise I will dub you a knight."

"I thank you, noble sir," said Don Quixote. "I will bring the armor at once."

"But stop!" cried the innkeeper. "Have you any money?"

"Not a penny," was the answer. "I have never read of any knight carrying money with him."

"Oh, well, you are mistaken there," said the innkeeper. "The books you have read may not say anything about it. But that is

because the authors never thought it worth while to write about such common things as money and clean shirts and the like."

"Have you any proof of that?"

"Most certainly I have. I know quite well that every knight had his purse stuffed full of money. Every one, also, carried some clean shirts and a small box of salve for the healing of wounds."

"It does look reasonable," agreed Don Quixote, "but I never thought of it."

"Then let me advise you as a father advises his son," said the innkeeper. "As soon as you have been made a knight, ride homeward and provide yourself with these necessary articles."

"I will obey you, most noble sir," answered Don Quixote.

He then made haste and got his armor together. He carried it to the barnyard and laid it in a horse trough by the well.

The evening was now well gone, and it was growing dark. Don Quixote took his shield upon his left arm. He grasped his long lance in his right hand. Then he began to pace to and fro across the barnyard. He held his head high, like a soldier on duty; and the old patched helmet, falling down over his face, gave him a droll if not fearful appearance.

The full moon rose, bright and clear. The barnyard was lighted up, almost as by day. The innkeeper and his guests stood at the windows of the inn, and watched to see what would happen.

Presently a mule driver came into the yard to water his mules. He saw something lying in the trough, and was stooping to take it out before drawing water from the well. But at that moment Don Quixote rushed upon him.

"Stop, rash knight!" he cried. "Touch not those arms. They are the arms of the bravest man that ever lived. Touch them not, or instant death shall be your doom."

The mule driver was a dull fellow and very slow. He but dimly understood what was said to him, and so paid no attention to the warning. He laid hold of the coat of mail and threw it upon the ground.

"O my lady Dulcinea! Help me in this first trial of my valor!" cried Don Quixote.

At the same moment he lifted his lance with both hands and gave the mule driver a thrust which laid him flat in the dust of the barnyard.

Another such knock would have put an end to the poor fellow. But Don Quixote was too brave to think of striking a fallen foe.

He picked up the coat of mail and laid it again in the horse trough. Then he went on, walking back and forth as though nothing had happened.

The poor mule driver lay senseless by the side of the trough. The innkeeper and his friends still watched from the inn.

"He is a hard-headed fellow," said one. "He is used to rough knocks, and will soon recover."

In a few minutes a noisy wagoner drove into the barnyard. He drove his team quite close to the trough. Then he began to clear it out in order to give water to his horses.

Don Quixote, however, was ready for him. He said not a word, but lifted his lance and hurled it at the wagoner's head. It is a wonder that the fellow's skull was not broken.

The wagoner fell to the ground, yelling most grievously. The people in the inn were frightened, and all ran quickly to the barnyard to put an end to the rough sport.

When Don Quixote saw them coming, he braced himself on his shield and drew his sword.

"O my Dulcinea, thou queen of beauty!" he cried. "Now give strength to my arm and courage to my beating heart."

He felt brave enough to fight all the wagoners and mule drivers in the world. But just then several of the wagoner's friends came running into the barnyard, and each began to throw stones at Don Quixote.

The stones fell in a shower about his head, and he was forced to shelter himself under his shield. Yet he stood bravely at his post, and nothing could make him abandon his arms.

"Fling on!" he cried. "Do your worst. I dare you to come within my reach."

He spoke with such fierceness that every man shrank back in fear. Some took refuge in the barn, but kept on throwing stones.

"Let him alone," cried the innkeeper. "He is a harmless fellow who wishes to become a knight. He has lost his senses through too much reading. Come away and leave him in peace."

The men stopped throwing stones. Don Quixote put down his shield and began again to pace back and forth between the horse trough and the barn. He allowed the servants to carry away the wounded wagoner and the unconscious mule driver; but he glared at them so fiercely that they were glad to get out of his reach.

The innkeeper began to think that he had carried the sport far enough. He was afraid that more and worse mischief might be done. So he spoke right gently to Don Quixote:—

"Brave sir, you have done nobly. You have guarded your armor with courage. You have shown yourself worthy of knighthood, and I will give you that honor without further delay."

"But it is not yet daybreak," answered Don Quixote. "I must guard my armor till the dawn appears."

"It is not at all necessary," said the innkeeper. "I have read of some very famous knights who stood guard only two hours; and you have watched for more than four hours although beset by many foes."

"Time flies swiftly when one is doing his duty," said Don Quixote. "The brave man is bravest when he curbs his anger; but if I am again attacked, I shall not be able to restrain my fury. Not a man in this castle shall be left alive unless it be to please you."

"You shall not be attacked," said the innkeeper. "You have guarded your armor quite long enough, and I will make you a knight at once, if you are willing."

"Nothing can please me better," answered Don Quixote; and he laid his lance gently down by the side of his armor.

The innkeeper, thereupon, called to his guests and servants to come and see the ceremony. A book was brought to him in which he kept his accounts of hay and straw. He opened it with much dignity while Don Quixote stood with closed eyes beside his armor.

The women of the inn gathered in a circle around them. A boy held a piece of lighted candle, while the innkeeper pretended to read a chapter from the book.

The reading being finished, Don Quixote knelt down in the dust of the barnyard. The innkeeper stood over him and mumbled some words without meaning. He gave him a blow on the neck with his hand. Then he slapped him on the back with the flat of his sword.

"Arise, Sir Knight," he said. "Thou are Don Quixote de la Mancha, the most valorous of men. Be brave, be brave, be always brave."

Don Quixote arose, feeling that he was now in truth a knight and ready to do valorous deeds.

One of the women handed him his sword. "May your worship be a lucky knight," she said.

Another arranged the green ribbons which held his helmet in place. "May you prosper, brave sir, wherever you go," she said.

Don Quixote threw his arms around the inn-keeper's neck and thanked him. He could not rest until he had done some gallant deed. So he sat up all the rest of the night, polishing his armor and thinking impatiently of the morrow.

The Adventure With the Farmer

At the earliest break of day, Don Quixote made ready to ride out in quest of adventures. He buckled on his armor. He took his lance and his shield in his hands. His gallant steed, Rozinante, stood saddled and bridled at the door of the inn.

He again embraced the innkeeper. "Farewell, thou greatest of my benefactors," he cried. "May heaven bless thee for having made me a knight."

Then, with the help of a groom, he mounted and rode forth into the world.

Right happily did he ride. For he felt that he was now in truth a knight, and his mind was filled with lofty thoughts.

Right happily also did Rozinante canter along the highway, and proudly did he hold his head. For did he not know that he was carrying the bravest of brave men?

They had gone but a little way when Don Quixote suddenly remembered the innkeeper's command to provide himself with money, clean shirts, and some salve.

"The command must be obeyed," he said. "I must go home and get those necessary things."

So he turned his horse's head and took the first byroad that led towards his village. And now Rozinante seemed to have new life put into his lean body. He sniffed the air and trotted so fast that his heels seemed scarcely to touch the ground.

"This is after the manner of heroes," said Don Quixote. "Yet I still lack one thing. I need a faithful squire to ride with me and serve me. All the knights I have ever read about had squires who followed in their footsteps and looked on while they were

fighting. I think, therefore, that while I am providing myself with money and shirts, I will also get me a squire."

Presently, as they were passing through a lonely place, the knight fancied that he heard distressing cries. They seemed to come from the midst of a woody thicket near the roadside.

"I thank Heaven for this lucky moment," he said to himself. "I shall now have an adventure. No doubt I shall rescue some one who is in peril, or I shall correct some grievous wrong."

He put spurs to Rozinante and rode as fast as he could to the spot from which the cries seemed to issue.

At the edge of the woody thicket he saw a horse tied to a small oak tree. Not far away, a lad of about fifteen years was tied to another oak. The lad's shoulders and back were bare, and it was he who was making the doleful outcry. For a stout country fellow was standing over him and beating him unmercifully with a horsewhip.

"Hold! hold!" cried Don Quixote, rushing up. "It is an unmanly act to strike a person who cannot strike back."

The farmer was frightened at the sudden appearance of a knight on horseback. He dropped his whip. He stood with open mouth and trembling hands, not knowing what to expect.

"Come, sir," said Don Quixote, sternly. "Take your lance, mount your horse, and we will settle this matter by a trial of arms."

The farmer answered him very humbly. "Sir Knight," he said, "this boy is my servant, and his business is to watch my sheep. But he is lazy and careless, and I have lost half of my flock through his neglect."

"What of that?" said Don Quixote. "You have no right to beat him, when you know he cannot beat you."

"I beat him only to make a better boy of him," answered the farmer. "He will tell you that I do it to cheat him out of his wages: but he tells lies even while I am correcting him."

"What! what!" cried Don Quixote. "Do you give him the lie right here before my face? I have a good mind to run you through the body with my lance. Untie the boy and pay him his money. Obey me this instant, and let me not hear one word of excuse from you."

The farmer, pale with fear, loosed the boy from the cords which bound him to the tree.

"Now, my young man," said Don Quixote, "how much does this fellow owe you?"

"He owes me nine months' wages at seven dollars a month," was the answer.

"Nine times seven are sixty-three," said the knight. "Sir, you owe this lad sixty-three dollars. If you wish to save your life pay it at once."

The farmer was now more alarmed than before. He fell upon his knees. He lifted his hands, imploring mercy. He sobbed with fright.

"Noble sir," he cried, "it is too much; for I have bought him three pairs of shoes at a dollar a pair; and twice when he was sick, I paid the doctor a dollar."

"That may be," answered Don Quixote, "but we will set those dollars against the beating you have given him without cause. Come, pay him the whole amount."

"I would gladly do so," said the farmer, "but I have not a penny in my pocket. If you will let the lad go home with me, I will pay him every dollar."

"Go home with him!" cried the lad. "Not I. Why, he would beat me to death and not pay me at all."

"He won't dare to do it," answered Don Quixote. "I have commanded him and he must obey. His money is at his house. I give him leave to go and get it. His honor as a knight will make him pay his debt to you."

"A knight!" said the lad. "He is no knight. He is only John Haldudo, the farmer."

"What of that?" said Don Quixote. "Why may not the Haldudos have a knight in the family?"

"Well, he is not much of a knight. A knight would pay his debts," said the lad.

"And he will pay you, for I have commanded him," said Don Quixote.

Then turning to the farmer, he said, "Go, and make sure that you obey me. I will come this way again soon, and if you have failed, I will punish you. I will find you out, even though you hide yourself as close as a lizard."

The farmer arose from his knees and was about to speak, but the knight would not listen.

"I will have no words from you," he said. "You have naught to do but to obey. And if you would ask who it is that commands you, know that I am the valorous Don Quixote de la Mancha, the righter of wrongs and the friend of the downtrodden. So, good-by!"

Having said this, he gave spurs to Rozinante and galloped away.

The farmer watched him until he was quite out of sight. Then he turned and called to the boy.

"Come, Andrew," he said. "Come to me now, and I will pay thee what I owe thee. I will obey this friend of the downtrodden."

"You will do well to obey him," said the boy. "He is a knight, and if you fail to pay me, he will come back and make things hot for you."

"Yes, I know," answered the farmer. "I will pay you well and show you how much I love you."

Then, without another word, he caught hold of the boy and again tied him to the tree. The boy yelled lustily, but Don Quixote was too far away to hear his cries. The farmer fell upon him and beat him with fists and sticks until he was almost dead. Finally he loosed him and let him go.

"Now, Andrew, find your friend of the down-trodden," he said. "Tell him how well I have paid you."

Poor Andrew said nothing. He hobbled slowly away, while the farmer mounted his horse and rode grimly homeward.

In the meanwhile, Don Quixote was speeding toward his own village. He was very much pleased with himself and with his first adventure as a knight.

"O Dulcinea, most beautiful of beauties," he cried, "well mayest thyself be happy. For thy knight has done a noble deed this day."

And thus he rode gallantly onward, his lance clanging against his coat of mail at every motion of his steed.

The Adventure With the Merchants

Don Quixote had not ridden more than two miles when, at a turn in the road, he saw several horsemen approaching him.

They were merchants of Toledo, and they were going to some distant town to buy silks. There were six of them, and each carried an umbrella over his head to shield him from the sun.

Following behind these horsemen there were four servants and three mule drivers, all on foot.

Don Quixote's heart beat fast when he saw this company.

"Here is an adventure worthy of my courage!" he cried.

He fixed himself in his stirrups, he couched his lance, he covered his breast with his shield. Then he posted himself in the middle of the road at the top of a gentle hill.

As soon as the merchants were within hearing, he cried out, "Halt there! Let all mankind stand still. No person shall pass here unless he is ready to declare that the peerless Dulcinea del Toboso is the most beautiful lady in the universe."

The merchants stopped in wonder at the strange being who thus barred their way. They were not long in guessing the truth.

"It is some poor gentleman who has lost his senses," they said to one another.

Then their leader rode forward a few paces and saluted the knight.

"Sir Knight," he said, "we do not know the fair lady whom you name. If you will let us see her, and if she proves to be as beautiful as you think, we will agree to all that you require of us."

"Let you see her!" cried Don Quixote. "I might do that if I chose. But the importance of the thing is in making you confess and declare her beauty without seeing her.

"Come now, raise your right hands and say what I demand of you."

The merchants sat quietly in their saddles, and made no answer.

"What!" cried Don Quixote. "Are you silent? Then know that I am your enemy, and I challenge you to combat right here and now."

He braced himself in his saddle and shook his lance; but still the merchants made no reply.

"Are you afraid, you cowards?" shouted the knight. "Come one by one; or come all together, as you please. I am ready for the combat."

Then he spurred his horse and rode furiously down the hill towards the astonished merchants.

There is no telling what might have happened had Rozinante behaved himself. But that gallant steed had gone scarcely twenty yards when he stumbled and fell in the middle of the road.

Don Quixote was pitched headlong into the dust. His long lance went flying into the weeds on one side of the highway; his shield was thrown among the bushes on the other. The knight himself made a funny appearance as he rolled and tumbled on the ground. The weight of his rusty armor held him down.

But even while he lay helpless in the dust, he was a hero with his tongue. "Stay, you cowards!" he shouted. "Do not run away. It is my horse's fault that I have been thus dismounted."

The merchants laughed. His sorry plight amused them no less than his wonderful pluck. They spread their umbrellas above their heads and rode onward over the hill.

But one of the mule drivers, who was an ill-natured fellow, could not bear to hear his master called a coward. He picked up the fallen lance and broke it in pieces. Then with one of the longer parts he belabored Don Quixote's sides until it was splintered into a dozen fragments. Nor did he stop until he was quite tired out.

Still Don Quixote was not conquered. Through all this storm of blows he lay kicking on the ground and daring his enemies to do their worst. "Slay me if you will," he cried, "but, still I affirm that the Lady Dulcinea is without her equal on earth."

At last the mule driver left him and ran onward to overtake his mules and his master.

When Don Quixote found himself alone he tried once more to get on his feet. But if he was unable to do this at first, how was he to do it now, all bruised and battered as he was?

As he lay helpless on his back it so happened that a plowman came that way. This plowman, who lived in Don Quixote's village, had been to the mill and was returning with a bag of meal on his donkey's back.

When he saw the knight sprawling in the dust he stopped, while the donkey began to make acquaintance with poor Rozinante who was picking grass by the roadside.

"Hello, my good friend!" cried the plowman. "What has happened to you?"

Don Quixote did not answer. He looked up at the sky and began to repeat a long speech he had read in one of his books.

"The fellow has lost his senses," said the plowman to himself.

Then he stooped and lifted the knight's helmet from his face. It was the helmet that had been patched with pasteboard and tied on with green ribbons; but the mule driver had broken it with kicks and blows, and the ribbons were torn into shreds.

As soon as the plowman saw the knight's face he knew him.

"Oh, my good neighbor Quixana," he said, "how came you here, and what is the matter?"

The poor gentleman paid no attention to his friend, but kept on repeating passages from his books. In fact, he was very badly hurt.

The plowman, with a good deal of trouble, lifted him up and set him astride of the donkey. He placed him so that he could lean over and rest upon the bag of meal. Then he got all the knight's armor together, and even the splinters of the lance, and tied them on the back of Rozinante.

Having seen that everything was secure, he took the steed by the bridle and the donkey by the halter, and, walking before them, he made his way slowly toward the village. He trudged thoughtfully along, often looking back and speaking kindly to the wounded man; but Don Quixote, resting on the bag of meal, answered only with sighs and groans. He complained most dolefully, but would not tell how he had fallen into misfortune.

"My dear Quixana," at length said the plowman, "I fear you do not know me."

"That is no matter," said Don Quixote. "I know very well who I am. What's more, I am perhaps not only myself but a dozen other brave knights all joined in one."

It was about sunset when they reached the village. The plowman did not wish his neighbors to see the poor knight in his battered and bruised condition, for he knew that much depended upon keeping him as quiet as possible. So he tarried

in a grove outside of the village until daylight had faded into dusk.

Then he led the poor man to his own house.

As he went up cautiously to the door he heard voices within.

The curate of the village and his friend the barber were there. These men were neighbors of Don Quixote, and it had been their habit to come in often and spend a pleasant evening with him.

The plowman stopped at the door and listened.

"What do you think?" cried the housekeeper. "My master has not been seen for two whole days. His horse, his shield, his lance, and the old armor that was his grandfather's have also disappeared."

"Indeed! And where can he have gone?" inquired the curate.

"Where? Where but riding over the world and making believe that he is a knight!" answered the woman. "It's all because of those vile books which he was forever poring over."

The niece then spoke. "Certainly it's the books," she said. "The books made him foolish. Why, I have known him to read forty-eight hours without stopping. Then he would fling the book from him and make believe draw his sword, slashing it about him in a most fearful manner."

"I have known him to do even wilder things than that," said the housekeeper. "Once, in broad daylight, he ran around this very room shouting that he had killed four giants as tall as church steeples. It was the books. They made him mad."

"Indeed, that's true," declared the niece. "It was the books—and they ought to be burned every one of them."

"You are right," said the curate. "Those books have unsettled his mind. Before the setting of another sun they shall be brought to trial and condemned to the flames."

During all this discourse the plowman and Don Quixote were just outside of the door, unseen, in the darkening twilight. Now, without more ado, the plowman cried out,

"Hello there, house! Open the gates, for here are a dozen valorous knights who bring a prisoner with them."

The housekeeper shrieked and dropped her broom on the floor. The curate and the barber rushed to the door, and the niece followed them with the lighted candle in her hand. When they saw Don Quixote astride of the donkey they all ran to embrace him.

"Have a care," he groaned. "Be gentle, for I am sorely hurt. It was all on account of my steed failing me. Carry me to bed, and send for the enchantress, Urganda, to heal my wounds."

"There! Didn't I say so?" whispered the housekeeper to the curate. "His head is full of those wicked books."

"Where are you wounded, uncle?" asked the niece.

"Wounded! I'm not wounded. I'm only bruised. I had a bad fall from Rozinante while I was fighting ten giants. You never saw such giants. They were the wickedest fellows that ever roamed the earth; but I was a match for them."

"Hear him!" whispered the curate to the housekeeper. "He talks of giants. It is as we feared. Those vile books must be condemned and burned without further delay."

They lifted the knight from the donkey's back. They helped him into the house and put him in his favorite chair.

Then the women asked him a thousand questions; but his only answer was that they should give him something to eat and let him alone.

This they did.

When he had eaten a hearty supper he crept off to bed without so much as saying good-night.

The Library

Early the next morning the curate and the barber came again. Don Quixote was still sleeping. Indeed, he did not awake until the day was more than half gone.

"We have come to remove the cause of his illness," said the curate; and he asked the niece to give him the key to the room where her uncle kept his books.

"Here it is," she said; "and I hope you will make clean work of it."

They unlocked the door and went in, the housekeeper following them. There, ranged neatly on shelves, they saw a hundred large volumes and a goodly number of smaller ones. The curate began to read the titles.

"Wait! wait!" cried the housekeeper. She ran out and soon came back with a sprinkling can full of water.

"Here, doctor," she said, "take this and sprinkle every nook and corner of the room. Some unseen sorcerer may be lurking among the books, and the water will drive him out."

The curate smiled and did as she desired. Then he asked the barber to hand him the books one by one, while he opened them and examined the title-pages.

"They are not all equally bad," he said. "Perhaps there are some that do not deserve to be burned."

"Oh, no!" cried the niece. "Do not spare any of them. Every one is bad. Every one has helped to undo my uncle."

"Throw them out of the window into the garden," said the housekeeper. "Then we will carry them around into the back yard and burn them where the smoke will not annoy anybody."

They worked all the morning. Often the curate would find a volume over which he would linger for some time. He would turn the leaves lovingly and look slyly at the pictures.

"It is a great pity to burn that," he would whisper; and then he would lay the book aside for his own reading.

The most of the volumes, however, were romances of knighthood and of really no value. The quick eye of the curate easily detected such trash as these, and they were cast out and doomed to destruction.

Towards noon every one began to tire of the business. "It's no use to examine any more of these volumes," said the curate. "They're all bad. Cast them out! Cast them out!"

The housekeeper was delighted. A bonfire was kindled in the back yard, and, while the curate and the barber were resting themselves, she threw into it not only the books which had been condemned but also the pleasant volumes which the good curate had decided to spare for his own edification.

Thus the good sometimes perish with the bad.

In the afternoon Don Quixote awoke from his long sleep. He was so bruised and so lame, however, that he could not rise. He could only lie in bed and feebly mutter the names of the housekeeper and his niece.

They brought him some food, and when he had eaten it he fell asleep again.

"It is best to let him rest," whispered the curate; and they left him alone.

For two whole days the knight did not go out of his room. But he was well cared for, and though he suffered not a little, he was never heard to complain.

While he thus lay helpless in his bed, the curate and the barber paid frequent visits to the house. They spent much time

in stopping up the door of the little room where the knight's library had been. This they did so cunningly that the housekeeper herself could not tell exactly where the door had been.

"If he cannot find the room, he will soon forget about the books," said the curate.

On the fourth day, Don Quixote was able to walk about a little; but he did not seem to feel sure of himself or of any object about him.

The first thing he did was to look for his library.

He went feebly up and down the long hallway, trying to find the door. He felt of the wall. He groped here and there, and stared confusedly around him. At length he gave up the search; but he said not a word to any one.

The next day he spoke to the housekeeper, "I do believe that I have lost the way to the study."

"What study?" asked the woman. "There is no study in this house."

"I feel quite sure that I once had a study with many books in it," said Don Quixote.

"Oh, that was long ago," answered the housekeeper. "But during your sickness one of those wicked enchanters, about whom you have read, ran away with it. He took not only the room but all the books that were in it."

Don Quixote groaned.

"Yes, uncle," said the niece, "an enchanter did it. He came one night, riding on a dragon. He alighted and went into your study. In a little while, he flew out through the chimney. He left the house so full of smoke that we could not see our own eyes. We looked everywhere for your library, but could find neither room nor books."

"I think I know who it was," said Don Quixote. "It was that famous enchanter, Freston. He has a spite against me and is my worst enemy."

"You are right, uncle," said the niece. "It was either Freston or Friston. At any rate his name ended with t-o-n."

"He is a bad fellow," answered the knight. "No doubt he will try to do me some other mischief. He knows where I live and will come often. But I am not afraid of him. Some day I will meet him in fair fight and vanquish him."

Then he arose and with his feeble hands took down the sword which had been hanging over the mantelpiece ever since his sad return. He felt of its edge, and murmured,

"Ah, Freston, Freston! Thou shalt yet learn of the prowess of the valorous Don Quixote de la Mancha!"

The Choosing of a Squire

For fifteen days the good old gentleman stayed at home. He moved quietly about the house, and seemed happy and contented. The loss of his library did not disturb him.

"A true knight will bear the disappointments of life with becoming fortitude," he said.

The niece and the housekeeper, and indeed every one else, began to hope that he would forget his strange delusion. They spoke to him cheerfully and tried to keep his mind on other things.

The curate called to see him every day, and they had many pleasant talks on many pleasant subjects. But always towards the end, Don Quixote would ramble back to the thoughts which still seemed uppermost in his memory.

"I tell you what, my dear friend," he would say, "the world would be better off if there were more knights in it. What we need most is knights, knights, plenty of knights."

Then he would go on for an hour or more talking upon his favorite subject. The good curate would nod his head and smile. He knew that it was better to humor his poor friend and let him have his own way.

As the days passed by, Don Quixote became more and more uneasy. The house was too quiet for him. He longed to be riding forth in quest of new adventures. He could not think or talk of anything else.

"But there is one thing lacking," said he to the curate. "I must find me a squire. All the knights that I ever read about had

faithful squires who followed them on their journeys and looked on while they were fighting."

The curate smiled and said nothing.

Now there lived in the village a poor man whose name was Sancho Panza. He was a common laborer who had often done odd jobs about Don Quixote's farm. He was honest but poor—poor in purse and poor in brains.

To this man Don Quixote had taken a strange fancy. Almost every day he walked down the street to talk with him. He was just the kind of fellow he wished for his squire.

At last he mentioned the matter. "Sancho Panza," he said, "I am a knight and I shall soon ride out on a knightly errand. You cannot do better than to go with me as my squire. I promise that you shall earn great renown, second only to myself."

"Renown, good master?" queried Sancho; "and what sort of a thing is that?"

"Why, your name will be in everybody's mouth," answered Don Quixote. "All the great ladies and gentlemen will be talking about your achievements."

"How very fine that will be!" said Sancho.

"And it may happen that in one of my adventures I shall conquer an island," continued Don Quixote. "Indeed, it is very likely that I shall conquer an island. Then, if you are with me, I will give it to you to be its governor."

"Well, I don't know much about islands," said Sancho, "but I'm sure I should like to govern one. So, if you'll promise me the first island you get, I'll be your man. I'll go with you and do as you say."

"I promise," said Don Quixote. "You shall be my squire; and since you will share my labors, you shall also share my rewards."

Then followed busy days for Don Quixote. He provided himself with money by selling a part of his farm. He mended his broken armor. He borrowed a lance of a friendly neighbor. He patched up his old helmet as best he could.

At last everything was in readiness, and the knight went down the street to talk with Sancho Panza. He wished to advise him of the hour he expected to start.

"I will be ready, sir," said Sancho.

"And be sure you have with you whatever it is necessary to carry," said Don Quixote. "Above all things, bring your wallet."

"Indeed I will, master," said Sancho; "and I will also bring my dappled donkey along. For I am not much used to foot travel."

Don Quixote was puzzled. He could not remember of reading about any knight whose squire rode on a donkey. Yet he feared to offend Sancho, lest he should lose his services, which now seemed indispensable to him.

"Your dappled donkey? Oh, certainly!" he said. "You may ride him until good fortune shall present you with a horse. And I promise that the first discourteous knight who meets us shall give up his steed to you."

"I thank you, master," said Sancho Panza; "but being used to the donkey, I shall be more at home on his back than on the back of any prancing steed you might give me."

The Adventure With the Windmills

Very early the next morning, the knight and his squire set out on their travels. They stole silently away from the village without bidding good-by to any one; and they made such haste that at sunrise they felt themselves quite safe from pursuit.

Don Quixote, riding in full armor astride of gaunt Rozinante, felt that he was indeed the most valorous knight in the world; and no doubt he was a formidable sight. As for Sancho Panza, he rode like a patriarch, with his knapsack on one side of him and a leather bottle on the other, his feet almost dragging on the ground. His mind was full of thoughts about that island of which he hoped to be the governor.

The sun rose high above the hills. The two travelers jogged onward across the plains of Montiel. Both were silent, for both had high purposes in view.

At length Sancho Panza spoke: "I beseech you, Sir Knight-errant, be sure to remember the island you promised me. I dare say I shall make out to govern it, let it be ever so big."

Don Quixote answered with becoming dignity: "Friend Sancho, you must know that it has always been the custom of knights-errant to conquer islands and put their squires over them as governors. Now it is my intention to keep up that good custom."

"You are indeed a rare master," said Sancho Panza.

"Well, I am thinking I might even improve upon that good custom," said Don Quixote. "What if I should conquer three or four islands and set you up as master of them all?"

"You could do nothing that would please me better," answered Sancho.

While they were thus riding and talking, they came to a place where there were a great many windmills. There seemed to be thirty or forty of them scattered here and there upon the plain; and when the wind blew, their long white arms seemed to wave and beckon in a droll and most threatening manner.

Don Quixote drew rein and paused in the middle of the road.

"There! there!" he cried. "Fortune is with us. Look yonder, Sancho! I see at least thirty huge giants, and I intend to fight all of them. When I have overcome and slain them we will enrich ourselves with their spoils."

"What giants?" asked Sancho Panza.

"Why, those who are standing in the fields just before us," answered the knight. "See their long arms! I have read that some of their race had arms which reached more than two miles."

"Look at them better, master," said Sancho. "Those are not giants; they are windmills. The things which you call arms are sails, and they flap around when the wind blows."

"Friend Sancho," said the knight, very sternly, "it is plain that you are not used to adventures. I tell you those things are giants. If you are afraid, go and hide yourself and say your prayers. I shall attack them at once."

Without another word he spurred Rozinante into a sturdy trot and was soon right in the midst of the windmills.

"Stand, cowards!" he cried. "Stand your ground! Do not fly from a single knight who dares you all to meet him in fair fight."

At that moment the wind began to blow briskly and all the mill sails were set moving. They seemed to be answering his challenge.

He paused a moment. "O my Dulcinea, fairest of ladies," he cried, "help me in this perilous adventure!"

Then he couched his lance; he covered himself with his shield; he rushed with Rozinante's utmost speed upon the nearest windmill.

The long lance struck into one of the whirling sails and was carried upward with such swiftness that it was torn from the knight's firm grasp. It was whirled into the air and broken into shivers. At the same moment the knight and his steed were hurled forward and thrown rolling upon the ground.

Sancho Panza hurried to the place as quickly as his dappled donkey could carry him. His master was lying helpless by the roadside. The helmet had fallen from his head, and the shield had been hurled to the farther side of the hedge.

"Mercy on me, master!" cried the squire. "Didn't I tell you they were windmills?"

"Peace, friend Sancho," answered Don Quixote, rubbing the dust from his eyes. "There is nothing so uncertain as war. That wicked enchanter, Freston, who stole my books has done all this. They were giants, as I told you; but he changed them into windmills so that I should not have the honor of victory. But mind you, Sancho, I will get even with him in the end."

"So be it, say I!" cried Sancho, as he dismounted from his donkey.

He lifted the fallen knight from the ground. He brought his shield and adjusted his helmet. Then he led his unlucky steed to his side and helped him to remount.

The sun was now sloping towards the west, and knight and squire rode thoughtfully onward across the plain of Montiel.

(Don Quixote had many more adventures, which you can read about.)

Dorigen

(*The Franklin's Tale* from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales)

Once upon a time a young knight, whose name was Arviragus, dwelt in Brittany. In the same country lived a beautiful lady called Dorigen. And the knight loved the lady.

For years Arviragus did not know whether she loved him or not. She was a great lady and very fair, and he was afraid to ask her. But she knew that he loved her, for when he rode past her window on his way to the wars, she could see her colors streaming from his helmet. At first she did not think much of this, for many knights fought for love of her; but as she heard of new and greater deeds that this noble knight did year by year, she began to care for him a great deal. When she thought of his goodness and of the honor in which he held her, she knew that there was no one else that she could love as she loved Arviragus. And when Arviragus knew that she loved him and was willing to be his wife, his heart was full of joy. So greatly did he wish to make Dorigen happy with him, that he said to her that he would obey her and do what she wished as gladly all his life as he had done while he was trying to win her love. To this she replied:

"Sir, since in thy great gentleness thou givest me so high a place, I pray to God that there may never be strife between us two by any fault of mine. Sir, I will be thy true and humble wife until I die!"

Then Arviragus took his bride home with him to his castle by the sea. He honored Dorigen as much as he had done before his marriage, and tried to fulfil her wishes in everything. Dorigen was just as eager to please Arviragus as he was to please her, and they were happy together in all their work and play.

Arviragus stayed quietly at home for a year, but after that he grew restless. He felt that no true knight had a right to live on quietly at home, with nothing to do except to order his castle and to hunt. So he sailed away to England that he might win honor and renown in the wars there.

Dorigen stood by the castle and watched his sails disappear in the north. Poor Dorigen! Her husband was gone, and she did not know if he would ever come back to her. For weeks she wept and mourned. At night she could not rest, and by day she would not eat. All the things that she had cared most to do were now dull and worthless to her because Arviragus was away.

Her friends saw her sorrow, and tried to comfort her in every way they could. When they found she would not be comforted, they spoke harshly to her, and told her that it was very wrong of her to kill herself with sorrow, when Arviragus hoped to come home again strong and famous. Then they began to comfort her again, and to try to make her forget her sadness.

After a long time Dorigen' s sorrow began to grow quieter. She could not have lived if she had always felt her grief as deeply as she did at first. Indeed, as it was, this sorrow would have broken her heart, if letters had not come from Arviragus. They brought her tidings of his doings, and of the glory he had won. But what comforted her most was that they told her that he would soon return.

When Dorigen's friends saw that she was less hopeless, they begged her to come and roam with them to drive away the last of her dark fears. This she did. Often she walked with them by the edge of the cliffs on which her castle stood. But there she saw the white ships and the brown barges sailing, one north, another south, to the havens for which they were bound. Then she would turn away from her friends and say to herself:

"Alas! of all the ships I see, is there never one that will bring my lord home? Then should I need no comfort. My heart would be cured of this bitter smart."

At times as she sat and thought, she leaned down and looked over the brink of the cliffs. But, when she saw the grisly, black rocks, her very heart trembled within her. Then she would sink down on the grass and wail:

"O God, men say Thou hast made nothing in vain, but, Lord, why hast Thou made these black, grisly rocks? No man nor beast is helped by them in all the world. Rocks have destroyed a hundred thousand men, and which of all Thy works is so fair as man? No doubt wise men will say, 'All is for the best.' But, oh Thou God, who makest the winds to blow, keep Thou my lord! And — would to God that these black rocks were sunk in the deep for his sake! They slay my heart with fear."

Dorigen's friends saw that the sea brought back her sorrow. They led her then by rivers and springs, and took her to every lovely place they knew, from which there was no glimpse of the sea.

In the valley, to landward of the castle, lay many beautiful gardens. One day in May, when the soft showers of spring had painted in brightest colors the leaves and flowers, they spent the whole day in the fairest of these gardens. They had games there, and they dined under a spreading tree. The breath of the fresh green leaves and the sweet scent of the flowers blew round them.

After dinner they began to dance and sing — every one except Dorigen. She had no heart to sing, and she would not dance because, of all who joined in the dance, not one was Arviragus. But, though she would not dance, she watched her friends and sometimes forgot her sorrow for a little.

Among the dancers there was a young squire named Aurelius. He was much beloved because he was young, and

strong, and handsome. Men thought him wise and good, but he was not always wise and good.

When the dancing was over, Aurelius came up to Dorigen and asked her to give him a beautiful jewel that she wore on her breast. He said to her, "Madam, of what use is thy jewel to thee when thou wearest it on thy bosom? Give it to me, and I will share with thee the price of it."

Dorigen turned and gazed at him.

"Is this what thou dost wish? I knew not what thou didst mean when thou didst look at me, but now I know. Listen, this is all I have to say to thee. I shall never part with my jewel, not though I were in rags and without food."

Then she remembered how Arviragus had loved to see her wear her jewel, as she always did, on a chain of gold that he had given to her on her wedding day. She thought of the sea that separated him from her, and of the cruel black rocks, and said in play:

"Aurelius, I will freely give thee my jewel when thou dost remove every rock on the shore from end to end of Brittany."

Then her anger at the selfishness of Aurelius rose again, and she bade him begone.

"Madam," he said, "it is impossible to move the rocks."

With that word he turned away, and went home to his own house. There his brother Austin found him in a trance, for Aurelius wished Dorigen's jewel more than he wished anything else on earth, and the thought that he could not get it made him so sad that he became dazed. Austin carried him to bed, and tried to soothe him in his grief and vexation.

The jewel that Aurelius wished to get from Dorigen was no common one. It had been given to her at her birth. It was clear as crystal, but far more rare, and it shone in the daylight like the sun. When Dorigen was a little child her mother told her of this

wonderful stone. She told her that it would bring her joy and peace and the love of all who were good and true, if she kept it bright and pure; but that, if she ever gave it away, she would lose her youth and her beauty, and would be hidden away from all her friends and left alone in the world.

Dorigen shuddered at the thought of parting with her jewel. She did not know how her mother's words could come to pass, if she did give it away, nor by what magic power she could be so lost that no one who loved her could find her again. But she was sure that what her mother had said must be true.

And that was why Dorigen was so angry with Aurelius. She knew that he must have heard what sorrow she would suffer if she gave him her jewel, for all the court knew the story of the wonderful stone.

Not long after this, Arviragus came home. He had won more honor than before, and was now the very flower of chivalry. I cannot tell you how great the joy was, with which he greeted Dorigen, nor how soon she forgot her fears of the sea and the grisly rocks.

For two years, while they lived a joyful life together, Aurelius lay in bed unable to rise, with no one to take care of him except his brother Austin. This brother mourned over Aurelius in secret and wept at his unhappy fate, till one day he remembered a book of magic that he had seen when he was a student in Orleans. In that book he had read of the strange ways in which Magicians can make things seem what they are not. His heart leapt up. He said to himself, "My brother shall be cured. I am sure I have heard of stranger things than that the rocks should seem to vanish. Once I heard of a Magician who made every one believe that a great brown barge was rowing up and down a sheet of water inside the hall of a castle! If he could do that, then surely we shall be able to find a Magician who will make those black

rocks seem to vanish. Then Dorigen will have to keep her promise and give Aurelius her wonderful jewel."

Austin then ran to his brother's room and told him about the book of magic at Orleans. No sooner had Aurelius heard him than he leapt out of bed. In less time than one would think possible he was ready to start on the long ride to Orleans.

When they came near the city they met a Magician. They knew him to be a Magician because of the strange look in his eyes, and because of his curious dress. When they rode up to him he bowed before them and wished them "Good day." Then he began to tell them why they had come to Orleans. Aurelius wondered how it was that this stranger knew so much about him and his errand. He thought he must be a very wise man indeed, and leaping from his horse in surprise and joy, he went home with the Magician to his house. His brother went too.

The house was the finest that Aurelius had ever seen. When he entered the study he looked in wonder at the rows of books that lined the walls, and at the quaint pictures and the strange old armor.

In one corner a curious light burned. It was not like the light of a lamp or of a candle, but cold and blue. Above it hung a map of the stars, and other strange drawings. Below the light stood a table, and on it lay a great book which was chained to the wall.

Austin saw Aurelius look at this book. He whispered to him, "It is the same book from which I read long ago."

This corner with its blue light made Aurelius frightened. A shudder passed over him when he saw the Magician cross over into the circle of the light and wave his wand.

In a moment Aurelius forgot all about the Magician and his own fear, for he and his brother saw before them the edge of a forest with a park stretching from the trees far, far away.

The sun shone, and the branches waved a little in the breeze. In the park the brothers saw herds of deer. Beautiful animals they were, with the highest antlers deer ever had. At first the deer fed in peace and safety. Then archers, clad in green, came to the edge of the forest. They glided out and in among the trees to see where they could best take aim with their arrows. When the archers had let their arrows fly, hounds broke out from behind them, and soon there was not one living deer of all the herd left in sight.

In a moment a calm river flowed where the park had been. In the shallow water at the river's edge tall herons stood. They watched for the little fishes that swam in the river. Again, into this quiet place a hunter came. He had no arrows. He had no dogs. But on his wrist he had an iron bracelet to which one end of a chain was fastened. The other end of the chain was round a hawk's foot, and the hawk sat on his master's wrist. When the hunter came near the river he loosed the chain from the bird's foot. The hawk flew over the river and swooped down among the herons. In a moment they had all vanished.

Aurelius had scarcely time to sigh, when the river itself was gone, and a plain lay where it had been. There he saw the knights of King Arthur's Table jousting. Beautiful ladies sat and watched the struggle, and one more fair than all held the prizes the knights might win.

Then the figures of the knights began to grow dim and uncertain. The plain changed into a great hall where knights and ladies danced. Everything was bright and sparkling. Mirrors lined the walls, and their cut edges flashed back the light that fell on them. As Aurelius watched the dance, he started. There, before him, more beautiful than ever, was Dorigen. His heart gave a great leap, for, as he watched her, he saw that she no longer wore her jewel. In his delight he swayed to the music of

the dance. Clap! clap! went the Magician's hands, and all was gone.

The great room that had seemed so splendid to Aurelius when he entered it, looked cold and plain now when he returned to it from fairyland.

The Magician called his servant and asked for supper. Then he led the brothers away and feasted them royally.

After supper the three men began to talk about what the Magician should get from Aurelius if he made the rocks vanish. The Magician said, "I cannot take less than a thousand pounds, and I am not sure if I can do it for that!" Aurelius was too delighted to bargain about what the cost would be. He said gladly: "What is a thousand pounds? I would give thee the whole round world, if I were lord of it. The bargain is made. Thou shalt be paid in full. But do not delay. Let us start tomorrow morning without fail."

"Thou mayest count on me tomorrow," said the Magician.

They went to bed, and Aurelius slept soundly and well, because of the hope he had that the Magician would make the rocks vanish.

Next morning they rose early. It was Christmas time, and the air was cold and frosty as they rode away. The very sunlight was pale, and the trees were bare. When they reached home the neighbors gathered round and wished them a Merry Christmas. "Noel, Noel," they said, but they would not have done so had they known what sorrow the riders brought to their beautiful lady Dorigen.

For many days the Magician worked with his maps and figures. Aurelius waited impatiently. There was nothing for him to do except to make the Magician as comfortable as he could, and to show him as much kindness as possible.

One morning Aurelius looked from his window towards the sea. He saw the Magician standing on the shore. As Aurelius gazed out to sea, the rocks vanished from north to south. His heart stood still. Then he rushed out and away to the edge of the cliffs for fear some rocks might still lie close to the land. But no, there was not one.

He went to meet the Magician and fell at his feet with the words, "Thanks to thee, my lord, thanks to thee, my cares are gone!"

After he had thanked the Wise Man, he hurried away to meet Dorigen. When he saw her he trembled. She was so pure and beautiful. His heart sank. Then he looked out to sea and saw the smooth surface of the water, and he grew selfish again.

Dorigen came quietly on. She had not noticed that the rocks had vanished, for Arviragus was safe on land, and she did not fear the sea any more. She had almost forgotten Aurelius and his selfish, greedy words. It was more than two years since she had seen him, and she had not heard of him since then.

She started back when he greeted her. Before she had time to speak he said, "My lady, give me thy jewel."

He saw Dorigen's face grow cold and angry, and said, "Think well lest thou break thy word, for, madam, thou knowest well what thou didst say. In yonder garden in the month of May thou didst promise to give me thy jewel when I should move the rocks. I speak to save thine honor. I have done as thou didst command me. Go thou and see if thou wilt, but well I know the rocks are vanished."

He left her then. She stood still, white and sick. She had never dreamt that such a trap as this could close on her.

"Alas," she said, "that such a thing could happen! I never thought a thing so strange and unheard-of could come to pass!"

Home she went in sadness and dismay. She was so weak with fear that she could scarcely walk. She had to suffer her sorrow alone for three days, for Arviragus was away, and she would tell no one but him. Her ladies saw her distress, but they could not comfort her. To herself she moaned, "Alas, O Fortune, I lay the blame on thee; thou hast so bound me in thy chain, that I see no help nor escape save only in death."

Arviragus came home on the third day after the rocks had vanished. He came at night, so he noticed nothing strange about the shore. Though every one was talking of the curious thing that had happened, no one liked to tell him. They knew he would not like to hear of it. He would think his country was bewitched.

Arviragus looked for Dorigen in the hall. When he could not see her there, he hurried to her room, to make sure that she was safe and well. As he sprang up the broad staircase, the sheath of his sword and the spurs at his heels clanked harshly on the stone steps.

Dorigen heard him, but, instead of going to meet him, she buried her head deeper in her cushions and wept. Arviragus crossed the room to where she sat, and knelt before her. He drew her hands from her eyes and said, "Dorigen, what is it? Why dost thou weep like this, my beloved?"

For a little time Dorigen's tears only fell the faster, then she said brokenly: "Alas, that ever I was born! I have said it! Arviragus! I have promised!"

"What hast thou promised, my wife? "

Then Dorigen told Arviragus all that had happened; told him that she had promised to give her jewel to Aurelius when he would take all the rocks away.

Arviragus leapt up and went to the window. The moon had burst through a cloud, and everything was bright and clear. He

looked away north, as Dorigen had so often looked to watch for his coming. In the moonlight Arviragus saw the sea lie smooth and cold. His eyes swept the skyline. It seemed as if all the rocks had sunk into his heart, it was so heavy.

He turned towards Dorigen, and saw how great was her sorrow.

Then he said very gently: "Is there aught else than this, that thou shouldst weep, Dorigen?"

"Nay, nay, this is indeed too much already, " she sighed.

"Dear wife," he said, "something as wonderful as the sinking of the rocks may happen to save us yet. God grant it! But whether or not, thou must keep thy troth. I had rather that my great love for thee caused me to die, than that thou shouldest break thy promise. Truth is the highest thing that man may keep."

Then his courage broke down, and he began to sob and weep along with Dorigen.

Next morning he was strong and brave again. He said to Dorigen, "I will bear up under this great sorrow."

He bade her farewell, and she set out with only a maid and a squire to follow her.

Arviragus could not bear to see Dorigen as she went down from the castle, so he hid himself in an inner room. But some one saw her go out. It was Aurelius. For three days he had watched the castle gate to see what she did, and where she went. He came forward and said, "Whither goest thou?"

Dorigen was almost mad with misery, but she said bravely, "To thee, to keep my troth, and give my jewel to thee, as my husband bids me. Alas! alas!"

Aurelius was full of wonder when he heard this. He began to be sorry for Dorigen, and for Arviragus the worthy knight, who

would rather lose his wife than have her break her word. He could be cruel no longer.

"Madam," he said, "say to thy lord Arviragus that since I see his great honor and thy sad distress, I had rather bear my own sorrow than drive thee away from him and all thy friends. I give thee back thy promise. I shall never trouble thee more. Farewell, farewell! thou truest woman and best that I have ever seen."

Down on her knees, on the roadway, fell Dorigen to thank Aurelius. Her blessing followed him as he turned and left her.

But how can I tell of Dorigen's return? She seemed to be treading on air. When she reached the room where her husband sat with his head sunk on his arms, she paused. She had not known the greatness of his love till then. He looked old and forlorn after the night of sorrow.

She spoke, and he raised his eyes to gaze on her, as if she had been a lady in a dream. But when she told him all, when he knew that she was there herself, and for always, he could not speak for joy.

Aurelius wished he had never been born when he thought of the thousand pounds of pure gold that he owed to the Magician.

He said to himself, "What shall I do? I am undone! I must sell my house and be a beggar. I will not stay here and make my friends ashamed of me, unless I can get the Magician to give me time. I will ask him to let me pay him part of my debt year by year till all is paid. If he will, my gratitude will know no bounds, and I will pay him every penny I owe."

With a sore heart he went to his coffer and took out five hundred pounds of gold. These he took to the Wise Man, and begged him to grant him time to pay the rest.

"Master," said he, "I can say truly, I never yet failed to keep a promise. My debt shall be paid to thee, even if I go begging in rags. But if thou wilt be so gracious as to allow me two years, or

three, in which to pay the rest, I will rejoice. If not, I must sell my house; there is no other way."

When the Magician heard this he said, "Have not I kept my promise to thee?"

"Yes, certainly, well and truly!"

"Hast thou not thy jewel?"

"No, no," said Aurelius, and sighed deeply.

"Tell me, if thou mayest, what is the cause of this?"

"Arviragus in his honor had rather die in sorrow and distress than that his wife should break her word. Dorigen would rather die than lose her husband and wander alone on the earth. She did not mean to give me her promise. She thought the rocks would never move. I pitied them so much that I gave her back her promise as freely as she brought her jewel to me. That is the whole story!"

The Magician answered, "Dear brother, you have each behaved nobly. Thou art a squire, he is a knight, but by God's grace I can do a noble deed as well as another. Sir, thou art free from thy debt to me, as free as if thou hadst this moment crept out of the ground, and hadst never known me till now. For, sir, I will not take a penny from thee for all my skill, nor for all my work. It is enough! Farewell! Good day to thee!"

Whereupon the Magician bowed once and again, mounted his horse, and rode away.

Dorigen and Arviragus were walking on the cliffs as the Magician parted from Aurelius. They noticed the two men, and when the horseman rode away they saw a strange white mist rise from the sea and follow the rider.

Dorigen caught her husband's arm, for there, there, out at sea, and close by the cliffs, were the rocks, grisly and black and fearsome as before. The sunlight fell on her jewel, and it shone

more brightly than of old, nor did its light ever grow dim in all the happy years that followed.

Emelia

(*The Knight's Tale* from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales)

Emelia the Radiant lived in a great castle in Athens.

Hippolyta, Emelia's sister, had once been queen of the Warrior Women, and had led her armies to battle. But Emelia had never fought in these battles. When she was still a child, Duke Theseus of Athens had fought with Hippolyta and conquered her. Instead of sending his royal captive to prison, Theseus married her, and took her home to Athens with him. When he took her there, he took Emelia with her. He was very kind to them both, and the castle in Athens was a happy home for Hippolyta and her little sister.

As Emelia grew up she became most beautiful. She was more graceful than a lily on its stem, and the flush on her cheeks was more delicate than the hue of the rose-petals in the old Greek castle garden. Her golden hair fell in heavy masses round her face, and lay in a great plait down her back. It caught all the light that fell on it, and sent it out again to make glad the hearts of those who looked on her. So men called her Emelia the Radiant, and all who met her smiled for joy at the sight of so beautiful a maid.

One May morning Emelia went into the castle garden to bathe her face in the early dew. Everything was dim and gray in the twilight. She looked up at the great dungeon tower which overshadowed the garden, and thought of the two young princes who were prisoners there. Duke Theseus had brought them from Thebes. He was very proud of them, and would not give them up, although the people of their land offered to give him gold and jewels for their ransom. The princes were cousins, and were the last of the royal line of Thebes. In the stillness Emelia murmured their names to herself, "Palamon and Arcite,

Palamon and Arcite. How miserable they must be in their narrow cell!" she thought. Then she sighed that life should be so sad for them while it was so bright for her!

As she roamed up and down and gathered roses white and red to make a garland for her hair, the sun broke through the mist and shone into the garden. Once more she raised her eyes to the tower. This time she did not look at it, but at the sunlit clouds beyond. The light from the east fell on her. Her hair shone like gold, and her face was radiant with happiness.

Palamon at that moment came to the narrow iron-barred window through which alone he and his cousin could see the sky and the fields and the city. He saw the morning light fall on the fair buildings of Athens, and on the plains and hills beyond. Then a glad song which burst from Emelia's happy heart floated up to him. He looked down. Before him stood the maiden bathed in sunlight.

She seemed to him the very Spirit of Beauty. He thought of all the joy and life and freedom that he could never have. He started back from the window and cried aloud.

His cousin Arcite sprang from his couch and said, "My cousin, what aileth thee? I pray thee that thou bear our imprisonment in patience. Sad it is in truth, but we must abide it. We can do nought else."

But Palamon said: "Thou art mistaken. Prison walls drew not that cry from me. An arrow hath entered my heart through mine eye, and I am wounded. What life can give is bound up for me in the fairness of a maiden who roams in yonder garden. Be she Spirit or woman I know not! But this I know, was never woman nor Spirit half so fair before."

"Spirit of Beauty," he cried, "if thou choosest to take the form of a radiant woman here before me in this garden, pity my

wretchedness! Save us from this prison, and if that may not be, have pity on our country and help our fallen friends."

Arcite pressed forward and leant over Palamon's shoulder. The window was only a narrow slit, and the wall through which it was cut was thick, so it was not easy for Arcite to see into the garden. At last he caught a glimpse of Emelia.

"Oh, how lovely she is!" he said. "I shall die of my wish to serve her. Most beautiful of maidens she is, truly."

When Palamon heard this, he turned on Arcite, looked coldly at him and asked, "Sayest thou so in earnest or in jest?"

"Nay, truly in earnest, my cousin; I have little will to jest!"

Palamon looked fiercely at him and said, "Little honor to thee then! Hast thou forgotten thine oath of truest brotherhood to me, and mine to thee? Hast thou forgotten thy promise to help me in all I do? How, then, canst thou dream of claiming to love my lady? This thou shalt not do, false Arcite! I loved her first, and told thee, and thou must help me to win her if ever we escape. Thine honor demands this of thee. Otherwise thou art no true knight."

But Arcite drew himself up scornfully and said, "Rather it is thou that art false! A moment ago thou didst not know whether she were maiden or Spirit! I loved her first for what she is, and told thee as my brother! But even if thou hadst loved her first, could I, because of that, refuse to love the fairest of maidens? Besides, why should we strive? Thou knowest too well that thou shalt never win her smile, nor yet shall I! These prison walls so thick and black leave no hope for us. We fight as did the fabled dogs for the bone. They fought all day, yet neither won. There came a kite while they raged, and carried off the bone. Love thou the maid if thou wilt. I shall love her till I die."

The prison had been narrow and bare and cold before, but now it seemed ten times more dismal. The world from which it

shut them in was so much more sweet because of the maiden who dwelt there, and the friendship for each other which had cheered them through many evil days was broken.

But Emelia the Radiant sang her songs and stepped lightly among the flowers, with never another thought of the weary eyes that watched her.

One day the greatest friend that Duke Theseus of Athens had, came to see him. This friend had known Arcite in Thebes, and had loved the handsome boy. He begged Theseus to forgive him, and to let him go free. Theseus was glad to find something he could do to please his dear friend, so one morning he took him with him to the prison where Palamon and Arcite were. The attendants could scarcely follow, for the royal robes filled all the dingy little space! A streak of light from the window fell on the Duke's mantle and his jewels. They looked strangely bright in that dark room beside the faded clothes of the two young prisoners.

Arcite and the friend of Theseus greeted each other joyously, and the heart of Arcite beat wildly with hope, but when he heard the words of Theseus the Duke it sank like lead.

"Arcite," said he, "by the desire of my friend, I grant to thee thy freedom. I grant it on one condition only. Thou must wander away far beyond my kingdom. If ever thou art seen for one moment on any furthest corner of my land, that moment shall be thy last. By the sword thou shalt die."

Homeward to Thebes sped Arcite with a sad heart.

"Woe is me for the day that I was born!" he moaned; "woe is me that ever I knew the friend of Theseus! Had he not known me, I might even now be gazing on the maiden I serve, from the window in the Duke's tower. Ah, Palamon, thou art the victor now! Day by day thou gazest on her, and kind fortune may grant to thee thy freedom and her favor while I am banished for ever!

Ah, why do we complain against our fortune? We know that we seek happiness, but know not the road thither! Think how I dreamt and longed for freedom, and thought that if I were only out of prison my joy would be perfect. Behold, my freedom is my banishment, and my hope my undoing!"

As for Palamon, when he saw that Arcite was gone, he made the great tower walls reecho with his howls of misery. The very fetters on his ankles were wet with his salt tears.

"Alas," he groaned, "Arcite, my cousin, thou hast borne off the prize in this strife of ours! Thou walkest now at liberty in Thebes. Little thou thinkest of me and of my sorrow! Strong thou art, and wise. Doubtless thou art even now gathering together the people of Thebes to invade this land and win the sister of the Duke for thy wife, while I die here in this prison like a caged lion. The prison walls heed my weeping and my wailing not at all."

He could not even rejoice in the sight of Emelia when she walked in the garden, so fearful was he lest Arcite should win her.

Meanwhile Arcite passed his days in Thebes in grief. He wandered about alone, and wailed and made moan to himself. He cared not to eat, and sleep forsook him. His spirits were so feeble that the sound of music brought fresh tears to his eyes. He grew gaunt and thin, and his voice was hollow with sadness.

At last, when he was nearly dazed with sorrow, he dreamt one night that a beautiful winged boy with golden curls stood before him. "Go thou to Athens," said the boy; "the end of all thy sorrow awaits thee there!"

Arcite started up wide awake and said, "I will to Athens, to my lady. It were good even to die in her presence."

He caught up a mirror. He had not cared to look in one for many months, but now that he meant to return to his lady, he

wished to see if he looked strong and young as ever. At first he was shocked to see how great a change had passed over his face. Then he thought, "If I do not say who I am, I may live unknown in Athens for years. Then I shall see my lady day by day."

Quickly he called to him a squire, and told him all his will, and bound him to keep his name a secret and to answer no questions about himself or his master. Then Arcite sent his squire to find clothes such as the laborers in Athens wore. When he returned, Arcite and he put on the clothes and set out by the straight road to Athens.

In Athens no one took any notice of the two poor men.

Before they came to the castle the squire left his master and found a house to live in, where he could do Arcite's bidding at any time. But Arcite hurried on to the courtyard gate. There he waited till the master of the servants who waited on Emelia came out. Then he said to him, "Take me, I pray thee, into thy service. Drudge I will and draw water, yea, and in all thou dost command I will obey."

The master of the servants asked Arcite what was his name. "Philostrate, my lord," said Arcite, and as "Philostrate" he entered that part of the castle where Emelia's home was.

He could hew wood and carry water well, but he was not long left to do such rough work. The master of the house saw that whatever he trusted to Philostrate's care was rightly done, so he gave him less humble work to do, and made him a page in the house of Emelia. The lords and ladies of the castle began to notice what a gentle and kind page this Philostrate was. They spoke to Theseus about him, and said that he deserved to have a higher place that he might show his goodness and courage in knightly deeds. To please them, Theseus made him one of his own squires.

Seven years passed away, and Palamon was still in prison. This year, however, in the May-time, a friend of his, who heard where he was, helped him to escape. During the short night he fled as fast as he could, but when the early dawn began to break he strode tremblingly to a grove of trees, that he might hide there all day. When the darkness fell once more he meant to go on again to Thebes, there to gather his old armies to make war on Theseus. He wished either to win Emelia or to die. He cared little for his life if he might not spend it with her.

As Palamon lay beside a bush in the grove, he watched the sunbeams drying up the dewdrops on the leaves and flowers near him, and listened to the joyous song of a lark that poured forth its welcome to the morning.

The same lark that Palamon heard awakened Arcite. He was now the chief knight in the Duke's house, and served him with honor in peace and war. He sprang up and looked out on the fresh green fields. Everything called to him to come out. He loosed his horse from the stall and galloped over hill and dale.

He came to the edge of a grove, and tied up his steed to a tree. Then he wandered down a woodland path to gather honeysuckle and hawthorn to weave a garland for himself. Little he thought of the snare into which he was walking. As he roamed he sang —

"O May, of every month the queen,
With thy sweet flowers and forests green,
Right welcome be thou, fair fresh May,"

The grove was the one in which Palamon lay beside a pool of water. When he heard the song of Arcite, cold fear took hold on him. He did not know that it was Arcite who sang, but he knew that the horse must belong to a knight of the court, and he crouched down to the ground lest he should be seen and taken back to prison.

Soon Arcite's joyous mood passed away, and he grew sorrowful. He sighed and threw himself down not far from the spot where Palamon lay.

"Alas, alas!" said Arcite, "for the royal blood of Thebes! Alas that I should humbly serve my mortal enemy! Alas that I dare not claim my noble name, but must be known, forsooth, as Philostrate, a name worth not a straw! Of all our princely house not one is left save only me and Palamon, whom Theseus slays in prison. Even I, free though I am, am helpless to win Emelia. What am I to her but an humble squire?"

Palamon was so angry when he heard this, that he forgot his own danger. He started out from his hiding-place and faced Arcite.

"False Arcite," he cried, "now art thou caught indeed! Thou hast deceived Duke Theseus and hast falsely changed thy name, hast thou? Then surely I or thou must die. I will suffer no man to love my lady, save myself alone. For I am Palamon, thy mortal foe. I have no weapon in this place, for only last night did I escape from prison. Yet I fear thee not. Thou shalt die, or thou shalt cease to love my lady. Choose as thou wilt!"

Then Arcite rose up in his wrath and drew his sword. He said, "Were it not that thou art ill and mad with grief, and that thou hast no weapon here, thou shouldest never step from where thou standest. I deny the bond thou claimest! Fool! how can I help thee to win the lady I fain would wed myself? But because thou art a worthy knight and a gentle, and art ready to fight for thy lady, accept my promise. Tomorrow I will not fail to wait for thee here without the knowledge of any other. Also I will bring armor and weapons for thee and me, and thou shalt choose of them what thou wilt, ere I arm myself!

"Food and drink will I bring to thee this night into the grove. If so be that thou slay me here tomorrow, then indeed thou mayest win thy lady if thou canst!"

Then Palamon answered, "Let it be so."

Next morning Arcite rode to the wood alone. He met Palamon on the woodland path where the flowers he had gathered the day before lay withered on the ground. No word nor greeting passed between them, but each helped to arm the other in silence. As the buckles were tightened and the armor slipped into its place, the color came and went in the faces of the two princes. They deemed that this would be the last of all fights to one of them.

When they were ready they fenced together for a little, and then the real fight began. So fierce was it that the men seemed like wild animals in their rage. Palamon sprang at Arcite like a strong lion, and Arcite glanced aside and darted at him again like a cruel tiger. In the midst of this they heard a sound of the galloping of horses that brought the royal hunters to the spot. In a moment the sword of Theseus flashed between the fighters, and his voice thundered out, "Ho! no more, on pain of death. Who are ye who dare to fight here alone, with none to see justice done?"

The princes turned and saw Theseus, Duke of Athens. Behind him rode Hippolyta with her sister, Emelia the Radiant, and many knights and ladies.

Palamon answered the Duke's question swiftly, before Arcite had time to speak. "Sire, what need of words? Both of us deserve death. Two wretches are we, burdened with our lives. As thou art a just judge, give to us neither mercy nor refuge, but slay us both. Thou knowest not that this knight, Philostrate, is thy mortal foe, whom thou hast banished. He is Arcite, who hath deceived thee for that he loveth Emelia. And I too love her. I too am thy mortal foe, for I am Palamon, and I have broken from my prison. Slay us then, here before fair Emelia."

"That is easily granted," said Theseus. "Ye judge yourselves. Ye shall die."

Then the queen began to weep, and Emelia too. They were sad to think that these two princes should die so young, and all for the service they wished to do to the queen's sister.

The other ladies of the court begged the Duke to forgive the fighters. "Have mercy, sire," they urged, "on us women, and save the princes!"

At first Theseus was too angry to listen to them, but soon he thought that he would have done as the princes had done, if he had been in their place, so he said, "Arcite and Palamon, ye could both have lived in peace and safety in Thebes, yet love has brought you here to Athens into my power, who am your deadly foe. Here then for the sake of Hippolyta, my queen, and of Emelia the Radiant, our dear sister, I forgive you both. Promise never to make war on my land, but to yield me your friendship evermore." Joyfully the princes promised this, and thanked the Duke for his grace.

Then Theseus said, "Both of you are noble. Either might wed Emelia the Radiant, but she cannot wed you both. Therefore I appoint a tournament in this place a year hence. Come here then, ye Princes of Thebes, each of you, with a hundred knights of the bravest, and that one of you, who shall slay or capture the other, he shall wed Emelia.

Whose face could be brighter than was Palamon's when he heard those words, and who could step more lightly than did Arcite? Every one thanked the Duke for his kindness to the princes, while they rode off to Thebes with high hopes and light hearts.

When the day of the tournament came, great buildings stood in a circle on the plain beside the grove. Within them stretched an immense arena in which the knights must fight. Great marble gates opened on to the space at either side.

Palamon and Arcite found it easy to bring a hundred knights to Athens. So splendid were the preparations for the tournament that every one was eager to fight in it.

Emelia alone was sad as the day of the fighting came nearer. Her maidens heard her say, "Oh that I might not wed at all! I love the free life of the woods. I love to hunt, and to ride, and to roam. Why cannot Palamon and Arcite love each other as they used to do long ago, and leave me free?"

On the morning of the tournament Duke Theseus and his queen sat with Emelia on a high seat overlooking the lists. When the trumpet sounded, Arcite and his knights rode in through the western gate. His red banner shone bright against the white marble pillars. At the same moment Palamon entered from the east, and his white banner floated out against the blue sky.

Soon the heralds ceased galloping up and down, and the whole space was left to the warriors.

The trumpets sounded "Advance," and the fray began. Through the bright sunshine they fought, advancing here, and beaten back there, till at last Palamon was hurled from his horse and taken prisoner.

The trumpets sounded, and all stood still while Theseus called out, "Ho! no more. All is over. Arcite of Thebes shall wed Emelia." Then the people shouted till it seemed that the great marble gates would fall.

In the eagerness of the fight Emelia had begun to like the warriors who fought for her, and her liking grew ever stronger as they showed their worth. When Arcite rode towards her with glowing face she was proud of him, and leant forward to welcome him gladly.

But as he galloped, his horse started aside and he was thrown to the ground. He was too much hurt to rise. So he was

lifted by his knights and carried to the palace. There he was cared for in every way, but nothing could save him.

Before he died, he called for Emelia and Palamon.

"No words can tell the sorrow I bear because I must leave thee, my lady! Alas, death tears me from thee! Farewell, my wife! farewell, my Emelia! Ah, take me softly in thine arms, and listen while I speak! For years I have had strife with my dear cousin Palamon. Yet now I say to thee, in all this world I never have met with one so worthy to be loved as Palamon, that hath served thee, and will serve thee, his life long. Ah, if ever thou dost wed, let it be Palamon!"

His voice began to fail. "Emelia!" he said, and died.

Emelia mourned sadly for her valiant knight. As for Palamon, all his old love for Arcite came back, and he wept for him as bitterly as he had bewailed his own sorrow in the dungeon.

When all the Greeks had ceased to mourn for Arcite, Palamon still grieved for the death of his friend, and for the strife that had been between them.

After two years Theseus sent one day for Palamon and Emelia. Palamon came to the court in his black robes of mourning; but Emelia was dressed in white, as she had been on the May morning in the garden years before. She had ceased to mourn for Arcite, and was Emelia the Radiant once more.

Palamon caught his breath. He had not seen her since they parted after Arcite's death.

Duke Theseus said, "Sister, I desire thee now to take the noble knight Palamon to be thy husband. Have pity on his long service, and accept him."

Then he said to Palamon, "It will not need much speech to gain thy consent! Come, take thy lady by the hand."

Then, in the presence of all the court, they were wed. When all was over, Emelia fled from the noise and tumult of the hall, and beckoned to Palamon to follow. Out at the great hall doors she led him, and down the pathway to the garden beneath the tower. When he joined her, she pointed to the dungeon window, and told him of the day when she had looked at the prison in the morning mist, and murmured to herself the names of the captive princes, "Palamon and Arcite, Palamon and Arcite."

But it was not till many years of joyous life had passed over their home that Palamon told Emelia that he had seen her first on that very morning when she had thought so sadly of his misery.

Griselda

(*The Clerk's Tale* from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales)

Once upon a time there lived a fair young girl whose name was Griselda. Her home was in an Italian village. There she dwelt in a lowly cottage with her father, Janicola. He was too old and weak to work for her, or even for himself.

All round the village lay the fruitful fields and vineyards of the plain, and on the slopes near grew olive-trees laden with fruit. Far in the distance rose the snow-capped mountains of the North.

Even in so rich a land it was not easy for this young Griselda to make her father's life as pleasant as she would have wished it to be. She lived plainly and barely. She was busy all day long. Now she was herding a few sheep on the broken ground near the village, and spinning as she watched her flock. Again she fetched the water from the well or gathered roots and herbs from which to make drugs.

Griselda was not unhappy though her life was hard, because she was so glad that she could serve her father and show her love to him, forgetting about herself and her own wishes.

One day as she sat watching her sheep her eyes fell on the white towers of a castle that stood not far from the village where she lived. It was the castle of the Marquis Walter, who was lord of all that land. Griselda looked kindly at the white towers. She thought that their master was the best and greatest man in the world. She knew that he was kind also, and courteous. When she saw him ride towards her, her face lighted up, and she rose to curtsy to him. She hoped he would draw up his horse beside her, and greet her, and ask for her father Janicola.

This morning, as she looked at the castle, she saw a company of men hurrying along the road that led to its gate. Farmers were there in dull and homely clothes, and knights in armor that flashed back the sunlight, and lords in bright colors that glanced and gleamed among the olive trees under the blue Italian sky.

Griselda knew why they were going to Lord Walter, and she wondered what they would do and say when they reached him.

She could not go after them, for her sheep would have wandered away if she had left them.

When the men that Griselda had watched reached the courtyard gate, they met Lord Walter. He was on horseback ready for the hunt. The foremost of the company prayed him to grant them a little time that they might tell him why they had come.

Lord Walter threw the reins to a squire, and led his people into the great hall of the castle. There he seated himself in state to listen to their grievance whatever it might be.

Then the same man who had spoken before said to him:

"Noble Marquis, thy generous kindness in times past giveth us courage to come before thee. Truly, sire, thou and all thou dost art so dear to us that, save in one thing, we cannot wish for better fortune than to live under thy government. One thing alone disturbs the peace of thy faithful people. Though thou art young and strong, yet age creeps on! Time flies and waits for no man. Death threatens young and old alike. We pray thee, sire, that thou wilt wed, for if swift death should lay thee low ere a son be born to thee, then alack for us and for our children! In the power of a stranger then would lie our fair lands and even our lives. Grant us this boon, noble Marquis, and, if thou wilt, we will choose for thee a wife. Noble shall she be, and good, so that thou shalt have honor and gladness in thy wedding."

Then the Marquis said:

"My people, loyal and true, ye ask of me that which I thought not to grant, for the free life of the forest and the hunt pleaseth me well. Yet will I do this thing that ye desire. Only to me myself must fall the choice of her whom I will wed. On you I lay this command that, be she who she may, yet shall ye honor her as if she were an Emperor's daughter through all her life. Nor shall ye raise one word against the maiden of my choice. Unless ye agree to this, I will not wed!"

Gladly the people promised. But ere they left the Marquis, they begged him to fix a day for the marriage lest he should put off too long. The Marquis granted their request, and farmers, knights, and lords trooped joyfully home.

When the morning of the day that was fixed for the wedding came, the castle of the Marquis was lavishly decorated. Flags floated out from the towers, and garlands trailed over the doorway and the gate. Within the great hall a royal feast was spread, and there lay royal robes and gems.

In the courtyard and on the terraces lords and ladies stood in groups. Wonder and doubt were on every face. The wedding-feast was prepared, the guests were come, but there was no bride.

A trumpet sounded "to horse," and all was hurry and noise. Then Lord Walter rode out through the castle gate. He was followed by bearers, who carried the beautiful robes and gems that had lain in the hall.

They rode out by the same road along which Griselda had watched the people go to ask the Marquis to wed, many months before. Now she saw the bridal train ride down from the castle. "Ah," she said, "they ride this way to fetch the bride. I shall work more busily than ever today that I may be free to stand and watch Lord Walter's fair bride as the riders return with her to the castle!"

Then she went to the well to fetch water. When she came back she found Lord Walter at her father's door. In the narrow lane beside the cottage stood lords and ladies, while their horses impatiently pawed the ground.

Quickly Griselda set her pitcher in a trough near the cottage door, and knelt before the Marquis to hear his will.

"Where is thy father?" Lord Walter asked.

"Close at hand, my Lord," said Griselda, and went to bring him without delay.

"My faithful servant," said Lord Walter to the old man, "grant me thy daughter for my wife!"

Janicola knew not what to say for surprise. At last he answered, "My will is thine! Do as thou wilt, my own dear Lord!"

"Then must I ask Griselda if she will be my wife; but stay thou by us. Thou shalt hear her answer."

Griselda was amazed. She did not know what the meaning of Lord Walter's visit was, and when she stood before him her face was full of fear. Her wonder was very great when she heard him say:

"Griselda, I am come for thee. Thee only will I wed. Thy father also is willing. But ere thou tell me whether or no thou wilt be my bride, listen to the demand I make. Art thou ready to obey me in everything, and to let me do to thee evil or good as I will without so much as turning to me a frowning face?"

This seemed a strange request to Griselda, but she loved and trusted Lord Walter so truly that she said:

"Lord, I am not worthy of this honor. Verily in all things thy will shall be mine. Life is sweet, but I will die rather than displease thee."

"Enough, Griselda!" he said.

Then Lord Walter turned to the courtiers and the people of the village who had gathered round:

"Behold my wife! Let all show their love to me by the honor and love they bear to her."

The ladies of the court were commanded to take off Griselda' s old clothes and to array her in the costly robes they had brought with them. They did not like to touch the poor soiled clothes she wore, nor to move about in the little cottage with their sweeping gowns; but the gentleness of Griselda made it pleasant to help her. They caught up Griselda's royal robes with great clasps of gold set with gems, and put a crown on her beautiful hair.

She came out and stood in the low doorway, where she had so often stood before. But now the people scarcely knew her: she looked so fair in her new robes and with the love-light shining in her eyes.

Lord Walter did not wait till he reached the castle. He was married to Griselda at her father's cottage door. The villagers gathered round and gazed at the simple wedding. They saw Lord Walter put a great ring on Griselda's finger, and lift her on to a milk-white steed. Then they led her with joy towards the castle. Wedding-bells rang out gladly across the plain, and ever as the wedding-party drew near to the white towers with their floating flags, happy bands of people came to meet and welcome Griselda.

Very soon the fame of Lord Walter's beautiful wife spread through the land. Nor was it only for her beauty that men praised her. Gracious she was and wise, able to rule her home, and to bend fiery spirits to her will.

From all the countryside men came to her in trouble. Every one rejoiced in the good fortune that had come to their land,

and some even called her an angel from heaven come to right all wrong.

After some time a daughter was born to Griselda. Then she thought she was the happiest woman in the world. She thought of the care that she would give her child as she grew up, and of Lord Walter's delight in his little daughter when the time should come that she could talk and ride with him.

But before the baby was a year old, all Griselda's dreams were broken. Lord Walter said to himself, "It is easy for Griselda to keep her promise when I ask of her nothing that is not just and right. How can I trust her until I know that she will obey me in everything? I wonder whether she would be patient still if I hurt our little daughter."

These thoughts came back to his mind so often that at last he resolved to try Griselda's patience by taking away her baby from her.

One evening Griselda was playing with her little child. The baby laughed in her arms and looked sweeter than ever. At that moment the curtain at the doorway was drawn aside and Lord Walter came into the room. His face was sad and drawn, and as Griselda looked up at him she feared that some great blow had fallen on him, or that some enemy had entered the country.

Lord Walter said to her:

"Griselda, thou hast not forgotten the day on which I brought thee from thy father's lowly cottage to this my castle. Although thou art most dear to me, thou art not dear to my nobles. They say that it is hard that they should serve one so lowly born as thou. Since thy daughter was born they have said this more and more, I doubt not. As thou knowest, my will is to live with my people in joy and peace. Therefore must I do to my child not as I wish myself, but as my nobles wish. Show then to

me the obedience that thou didst promise to show when thou wert wed in the village street."

As Griselda heard these words she made no moan. Neither did she let the pain that caught at her heart be seen in her face. When she could speak, she said:

"Lord, we are thine! My child is thine. I also am thine. With thine own thou mayest ever do as pleaseth thee best."

The Marquis was full of joy because of the patience and humbleness of Griselda; but he appeared to be sad, and left her with a troubled face.

Soon after this, Griselda started as she heard a heavy footstep on the stairway. Then an evil-looking man walked into the quiet room.

"Madam," he said, "I must obey my lord's will. He bids me take this child. Thou knowest we must obey, although we may complain and mourn."

Then the soldier took the child so roughly that it seemed as if he would kill it before her. Griselda said:

"Pray, sir, do thou suffer me to kiss my child ere it die." He gave it back to her. Gently she gathered it in her arms. She blessed it, and lulled it, and kissed it. Then she said in her sweet voice: "Farewell, my child, I shall see thee never again. The blessing of Him who died on a cross of wood for us, rest on thee. To Him I give thy soul, my little one! Tonight thou must die because of me."

To the rough soldier she said:

"Take again the child and obey my Lord. But if it please my Lord, then of thy kindness bury thou the little body where no cruel bird nor beast can harm it!"

But in silence the soldier carried away the child.

Then Lord Walter looked to see if Griselda would fret or be less kind to him. He watched, but could see no change in her. She was as busy and loving and cheerful as ever. Neither in earnest nor in play did she name her child.

After four years a son was born to Griselda. The people were very glad because there was now an heir to rule the land at the death of Lord Walter. Griselda too was happy, though her heart longed for the little maid who might have been playing with her brother.

When the boy was two years old, Lord Walter began to wish once more to try the patience of Griselda.

This time he said to her:

"Wife, I have told thee before how ill the people bear our marriage. Now that a son is born they are more wrathful than before. My heart is weary with the thought of their complaints. They say, 'When Lord Walter is gone, the grandson of Janicola shall rule us!' Therefore I shall do with my son as I did with his sister. Be patient, I pray thee."

"Thou art my Lord," said Griselda. "My will and my freedom lie in my father's cottage with the poor soiled clothes I left there on the day thou didst bring me hither. Could I know thy will before thou didst tell it to me, it would be done, though it were death to do it. Life cannot compare with thy love.'

Lord Walter looked down to the ground. He could not look at his wife lest he should not have heart to do as he wished.

Again the rude soldier came to Griselda. He was even harsher than before, and carried off the child without a kind word to the patient mother.

When the little boy was gone, the people said very bitter things about Lord Walter. The love they had given him before was turned into hatred because he had treated his beautiful wife so unkindly, and because he had murdered his children.

Though Lord Walter saw this, he wished to try his wife once more. He knew that he could send away his wife and marry another if he got a letter from the Pope to say that he might. He sent a messenger to Rome, where the Pope lived. This messenger was told to bring back a letter, not from the Pope, but as like one of his as possible.

The letter came. It said that because of the anger of Lord Walter's people at the lowly birth of his wife Griselda, the Marquis might send her away and marry another.

The news of the letter spread throughout the land. Every one believed that it had really come from the Pope.

Griselda' s heart was very sore when she heard of this letter.

But she went on quietly with each day's work. She did not even speak of the letter to her husband.

At last Lord Walter spoke before all his court, and with no knightly gentleness.

"Griselda," he said, "there is no freedom in the life of one who rules. I may not act after my own wish as any laborer on my land may do. As thou knowest, my people hate thy presence, and demand of me that I wed another. The Pope's letter thou hast heard. Return then, swiftly and without complaint, to thy father's cottage, for already my bride cometh hither."

"My Lord, it is no new thought to me, that I am unworthy to be thy servant — far more unworthy to be thy wife. In this great house of which thou didst make me queen, I have not acted as mistress, but only as lowly handmaid to thee. For these years of thy kindness, I thank thee. Gladly do I go to my father's house. There he tended me when I was but a child. Now I will stay with him till death enters the cottage door. To thee and to thy bride be joy. To her I willingly yield the place where I have been so happy. Since thou, who once wert all my joy, wilt have me go, I go!"

Lord Walter turned away in sadness. He could scarcely speak for pity, but he held to his purpose.

Then Griselda drew her wedding-ring from her finger, and laid it down. Beside it she put the gems that Lord Walter had given her. Her beautiful robes she laid aside. In the simplest gown she could find, and with head and feet all bare, Griselda went down through the olive trees towards her father's house.

Many of Lord Walter's people followed her, weeping and bewailing the fickleness of fortune. Griselda did not turn to them, nor speak, nor weep. She quietly went on her way.

When the tidings reached her father, he wished that he had never been born, so sad was he in the sorrow of his beautiful daughter. He hastened out to meet her, and wrapped her tenderly in her old cloak, and led her home with tears.

Griselda spoke no word of complaint, nor did she speak of her former happiness. Once more she tended the sheep on the common. Once more she carried water from the well. Once more she thought first of her father.

After some weeks Lord Walter sent for Griselda. She went to the castle and greeted him humbly as of old. She showed no grudge because of his unkindness.

"Griselda," he said, "thou knowest, as doth no other, how all this castle should be ordered for my pleasure. Stay thou then, and have all in readiness for the fair young bride whom I shall wed tomorrow. It is my will that she be welcomed royally."

"My whole desire is to serve thee, my Lord. Neither weal nor woe shall ever make me cease to love thee with all my heart."

At once Griselda took control of all who worked in the castle. Of them all she was the neatest and the quickest. Soon every room in the tower was sweet and clean. The great hall was decked for the wedding-feast, and the table glittered with silver.

Early next morning many horsemen came to the castle. Among them was a beautiful girl dressed in a shimmering white robe. Near her rode a charming boy younger than the maiden. Round them were many nobles, and a guard of soldiers, who had brought them to Lord Walter's court.

The people crowded round the gates. So charmed were they with the fair young maid, that some of them forgot their love for Griselda, and were ready to welcome the bride whose coming caused her so much sorrow.

Still Griselda moved about the castle in her old worn clothes. She went to the gate to welcome the bride. Then she received the guests and greeted each of them according to his degree.

The stranger nobles wondered who Griselda could be. She was so wise and gentle, and yet so meanly dressed.

Before the feast began, Lord Walter called Griselda to him. Then he asked her, "What dost thou think of my wife? Is she beautiful?"

"Never have I seen a fairer," said Griselda. "Joy be with you both evermore! But oh! I beg of thee, torment not this child as thou didst me. She has been tenderly cared for. She could not bear what I have borne."

When Lord Walter saw her great patience, and thought of the pain he had caused her, his heart went out to her in great pity, and he cried, "It is enough, Griselda; fear no more, nor be thou longer sad. I have tried thy faith and thy sweetness, as faith and sweetness have never before been tried."

His arms were around her, and he kissed her. Griselda looked at him in wonder. She could not understand.

"Griselda," he said, "thou art my wife. I have no other. This is thy daughter; her brother is my heir. Thine are they both. Take them again, and dream not that thou art bereft of thy children.

When Griselda heard all this she fainted away in her great joy. When she woke again she called her children to her. Timidly they came, but soon they were caught close to her breast. While she fondled them, and kissed them, her hot tears of joy fell on their fair faces, and on their hair. Then she looked at Lord Walter, and said, "Death cannot harm me now, since thou lovest me still." Then she turned back to the children.

"Oh tender, oh dear, oh little ones, my children! Your sorrowful mother thought that cruel dogs or other fearsome beasts had torn you! but God has kept you safe."

Once again the ladies of the court dressed Griselda in royal robes. Once again they set a golden crown upon her head. Once again the wedding ring slipped into its own place on her finger.

Ere she entered the hall of feasting again, swift messengers had brought her old father, Janicola, to the castle, never to leave it again.

Then Griselda sat with her children beside her husband. To her feet came lords and nobles, peasants and farmers, eager to kiss her hand and to show the joy they felt in her return.

Never had the walls of the castle reechoed the laughter of so glad a people. All day long till the stars shone in the cool clear sky the feasting went on.

For Griselda this was the first of many happy days, happier than she had known before.

In her home sounded the voices of happy children as they played with, and cared for, the old grandfather whom their mother loved so dearly. And ever as she moved about the castle she met the eyes of Lord Walter, that told her again and yet again that he trusted her utterly.

The Unknown Bride

(*The Wife of Bath's Tale* from Chaucer's Canterbury Tales)

The next pilgrim called upon for a tale was the wife of Bath. She chose to tell one of the days of King Arthur.

In the olden times, many hundred years ago, the whole land was full of fairies. They were on the hills and in the valleys, and whoever went to any green meadow was sure to see the elf-rings where the fairy queen and her merry rout had been dancing the night before. There are no fairies now; and if you go where they used to be, you will be sure to see a begging friar roaming up and down the land, but never a fairy.

Now in the times when there were fairies everywhere, it came to pass that a knight who dwelt at King Arthur's court forgot his vow to guard all women and treated one despitefully. The law was that any knight so faithless to his word should straightway be put to death; but this knight was a favorite at the court, and every one of the court ladies, from the Queen down, pleaded that his life might be spared. They begged King Arthur for mercy so often and so earnestly that at length he said, "I will give him to the Queen, and he may live or die according to her will."

The Queen and all her ladies thanked the King; and then the Queen said to the guilty knight, "It is true that we have besought the King for you, but your life is not yet sure. It is not right that you should go unpunished. The rope is even now about your neck, but on one condition you shall be free. If in a year and a day you can tell me what it is that women wish for most, then your life shall be spared."

The knight took his leave of the Queen and the court and went his way to find out what women wish for most. He roamed

the world over and asked every one that he met. They all had answers, some of them most excellent ones, but the trouble was that no two agreed. One said women cared most for riches, another said for honor, another for merriment, another for brilliant attire, another for praise, another for freedom. One even insisted that a woman would rather keep a secret than do anything else; but of course that is nonsense, for we women cannot conceal things. Don't you know Ovid's story of King Midas? He had a pair of donkey's ears, but he contrived to hide them so well under his long hair that no one in the world except his wife knew they were there. He begged her most earnestly not to let any one know the secret, and she promised that if the whole world were offered her, she would never reveal it. She meant to keep her word; but that secret bubbled and swelled so about her heart that she felt she could not live without telling some one. She did not dare tell it to any person, and so she slipped away to a marsh that was full of reeds. She stooped and put her mouth down close to the water and whispered, "O water, I am going to tell you a secret, but don't you ever let any one know it: my husband has two long donkey's ears!" There you see that we women cannot keep a secret.

But to go back to the knight. When he found that, go where he would and ask whom he would, no two persons agreed in their answers, he was sorrowful indeed; for if not even two people thought the same, there was no hope that he had found the answer which would save his neck from the rope. But the day had come when he must return, or else his sureties would be put to death in his place. He turned about sadly, and with many a sigh he rode along by the edge of a forest. As he cast his eyes a little way ahead, he saw full four and twenty ladies dancing on a little green. " Perhaps they are some of the wise folk and can give me the answer," he said to himself, and he hastened toward them eagerly. But, alas, before he had come to the dance, the ladies had all disappeared, and in their place was one old crone, bent

and bowed and more hideous than he had ever imagined a woman could be. When he came nearer, she rose slowly and clumsily to her feet and said, "Sir knight, there is no road here. What are you in search of? We old folk know a good many things, and it may be better for you to tell me what you want."

The knight was so miserable that he was glad to tell his trouble to any one who would listen, and he said, "Good mother, if you could only tell me what it is that women want most, I would reward you well, for I am a dead man if I cannot find out."

"What women want most? " repeated the old crone. "There is no difficulty about telling that. See, we will make a bargain. I will tell you the answer if in return you will agree to do the first thing I ask of you."

"By my faith as a knight I promise you," he said; and, indeed, he was so wretched that he would have promised anything to any one who would give him the slightest hope of safety.

The woman said, "Cheer up, cheer up, my good knight. Your life is safe; for I will wager my own that the humblest and the proudest, the poorest and the richest, even the Queen herself, will have to say that I am right. Don't be afraid; this is your answer," and she whispered a few words into his ear.

It was not long before the knight came to the palace, and sent a message to the Queen that he had kept his day faithfully and was ready with his answer. A time was set, and all the ladies of the court, maidens, wives. and widows, came together to hear what answer he would give. The Queen sat on a dais with the court ladies around her. There was no need of calling for silence, for every one there was holding her breath and straining her ears to hear what the knight would say. He walked into the room with his head held up fearlessly, and bowed low before the Queen.

"Tell me," she said, "what it is that women most desire."

There was no need that the court ladies should strain their ears, for the knight answered in a clear, manly voice, "The thing that women most desire is to rule their husbands. This is their strongest wish. I declare it even though you put me to death. I am at your mercy. Do with me as you will."

There was not one court lady present who would deny the truth of what he had said. They all agreed that he ought to have his life, and the Queen at once declared that he was free of every bond and claim.

"No, my lady Queen," said a strange voice. "I beg your mercy, but there is yet a claim upon him. Give me justice, I pray, before you depart. I told the knight what answer to make, and in return he vowed by his knightly faith that he would do the first thing I should ask of him if it were in his power. Now before this court I demand, sir knight, that you take me for your own wedded wife. You know well that I saved you from the gallows tree. If I speak falsely, deny this upon your faith."

"Alas," said the knight, "I know only too well that such was my promise; but for God's sake make another choice. Take all my wealth if you will, but let me go free."

"No," she replied. "I am old and homely and poor, but for all the gold that is buried in the earth I would not give up being your wife and your love."

"My love? Rather, my ruin," said the knight. "Alas, that such a thing should be, that such a shame should befall my house!" There was no help for it, however, he must take the old crone for his wife, and so he married her; but you may know well that there was no merriment and no feasting at that wedding.

After the wedding, the knight was so glum and serious that the bride said, "Is this the way King Arthur's knights behave with their brides? I am your love and your wife, and, surely, I have never done you a wrong. Did I not save your life? Why do you

treat me so? If I have done anything unkind to you. tell me what it is, that I may make all the amends in my power."

"Amends!" cried the knight. "There are no amends that can be made, for you come of such common folk, and you are so poor and old and homely."

Then the bride told him that folk might indeed hand down their wealth to their children, but not their goodness; that a man is not noble because he is the son of a duke or an earl, but because he himself does noble deeds. "I am of gentle blood," she said, "if I live virtuously and do not sin. And as for my poverty," she continued, "it is true that a man would never choose to be poor; but, nevertheless, he who is poor need have no dread of thieves. Poverty is like a glass through which one may see who are his true friends; and sometimes poverty teaches a man to know both his God and himself. You call me old, but is it not true that gentle folk of honor and courtesy never fail to show respect to age? Often it happens that with age comes wisdom."

The knight could not help seeing that her words were wise and true, and when she asked, "Would you rather have me old and poor and homely and come of common folk, but a faithful, loving wife; or, perchance, young and rich and handsome and of high birth, but careless of your love and maybe false to you?"He pondered and sighed, and sighed and pondered; and at last he said, "I believe that you are wise and good, and I take you for my true and faithful wife."

"On my word I will be to you as true a wife as ever lived since the world was made," declared his bride. " Now kiss me once and then draw up the curtain."

The knight obeyed; and when he had drawn up the curtain and turned his eyes upon her in the full sunlight, behold, she was young and fair and charming. He caught her in his arms and kissed her, not once, but a thousand times, and then a thousand

more; and unto the last day of their lives they lived in peace and happiness.

The Red Cross Knight

(Edmund Spencer's *The Faerie Queene*)

The Court of the Queen

Once upon a time, in the days when there were still such things as giants and dragons, there lived a great Queen. She reigned over a rich and beautiful country, and because she was good and noble every one loved her, and tried also to be good. Her court was the most splendid one in the world, for all her knights were brave and gallant, and each one thought only of what heroic things he could do, and how best he could serve his royal lady.

The name of the Queen was Gloriana, and each of her twelve chief knights was known as the Champion of some virtue. Thus Sir Guyon was the representative of Temperance, Sir Artegall of Justice, Sir Calidore of Courtesy, and others took up the cause of Friendship, Constancy, and so on.

Every year the Queen held a great feast, which lasted twelve days. Once, on the first day of the feast, a stranger in poor clothes came to the court, and, falling before the Queen, begged a favour of her. It was always the custom at these feasts that the Queen should refuse nothing that was asked, so she bade the stranger say what it was he wished. Then he besought that, if any cause arose which called for knightly aid, the adventure might be entrusted to him.

When the Queen had given her promise he stood quietly on one side, and did not try to mix with the other guests who were feasting at the splendid tables. Although he was so brave, he was very gentle and modest, and he had never yet proved his valour in fight, therefore he did not think himself worthy of a place

among the knights who had already won for themselves honour and renown.

Soon after this there rode into the city a fair lady on a white donkey. Behind her came her servant, a dwarf, leading a warlike horse that bore the armour of a knight. The face of the lady was lovely, but it was very sorrowful.

Making her way to the palace, she fell before Queen Gloriana, and implored her help. She said that her name was Una; she was the daughter of a king and queen who formerly ruled over a mighty country; but, many years ago, a huge dragon came and wasted all the land, and shut the king and queen up in a brazen castle, from which they might never come out. The Lady Una therefore besought Queen Gloriana to grant her one of her knights to fight and kill this terrible dragon.

Then the stranger sprang forward, and reminded the Queen of the promise she had given. At first she was unwilling to consent, for the Knight was young, and, moreover, he had no armour of his own to fight with.

Then said the Lady Una to him, "Will you wear the armour that I bring you, for unless you do you will never succeed in the enterprise, nor kill the horrible monster of Evil? The armour is not new, it is scratched and dinted with many a hard-fought battle, but if you wear it rightly no armour that ever was made will serve you so well."

Then the stranger bade them bring the armour and put it on him, and Una said, "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."

And when the stranger had put off his own rough clothes and was clad in this armour, straightway he seemed the goodliest man in all that company, and the Lady Una was well pleased with her champion; and, because of the red cross which he wore on his breastplate and on his silver shield, henceforth he was known always as " the Red Cross Knight." But his real name was Holiness, and the name of the lady for whom he was to do battle was Truth.

So these two rode forth into the world together, while a little way behind followed their faithful attendant, Prudence. And now you shall hear some of the adventures that befell the Red Cross Knight and his two companions.

The Wood of Error

The first adventure happened in this way. Scarcely had the Red Cross Knight and the Lady Una started on their journey when the sky suddenly became overcast, and a great storm of rain beat down upon the earth. Looking about for shelter, they saw, not far away, a shady grove, which seemed just what they wanted. The trees here had great spreading branches, which grew so thickly overhead that no light could pierce the covering of leaves. Through this wood wide paths and alleys, well trodden, led in all directions, it seemed a truly pleasant place, and a safe shelter against the tempest, so they entered in at once.

At first, as they roamed along the winding paths they found nothing but pleasure. Deeper and deeper into the heart of the wood they went, hearing with joy the sweet singing of the birds, and filled with wonder to see so many different kinds of beautiful trees clustered in one spot. But by-and-by, when the storm was over and they wished to go forward on their journey, they found, to their sorrow, that they had lost their way. It was impossible to remember by which path they had come; every

way now seemed strange and unknown. Here and there they wandered, backwards and forwards; there were so many turnings to be seen, so many paths, they knew not which to take to lead them out of the wood.

In this perplexity, at last they determined to go straight forward until they found some end, either in or out of the wood. Choosing for this purpose one of the broadest and most trodden paths, they came presently, in the thickest part of the wood, to a hollow cave. Then the Red Cross Knight dismounted from his steed, and gave his spear to the dwarf to hold.

"Take heed," said the Lady Una, "lest you too rashly provoke mischief. This is a wild and unknown place, and peril is often without show. Hold back, therefore, till you know further if there is any danger hidden there."

"Ah, lady," said the Knight, "it were shame to go backward for fear of a hidden danger. Virtue herself gives light to lead through any darkness."

"Yes," said Una; "but I know better than you the peril of this place, though now it is too late to bid you go back like a coward. Yet wisdom warns you to stay your steps, before you are forced to retreat. This is the Wandering Wood, and that is the den of Error, a horrible monster, hated of all. Therefore, I advise you to be cautious."

"Fly, fly! this is no place for living men!" cried timid Prudence.

But the young Knight was full of eagerness and fiery courage, and nothing could stop him. Forth to the darksome hole he went, and looked in. His glittering armour made a little light, by which he could plainly see the ugly monster. Such a great, horrible thing it was, something like a snake, with a long tail twisted in knots, with stings all over it. And near this wicked big creature, whose other name was Falsehood, there were a

thousand little ones, all varying in shape, but every one bad and ugly; for you may be quite sure that wherever one of this horrible race is found, there will always be many others of the same family lurking near.

When the light shone into the cave all the little creatures fled to hide themselves, and the big parent Falsehood rushed out of her den in terror. But. when she saw the shining armour of the Knight she tried to turn back, for she hated light as her deadliest foe, and she was always accustomed to live in darkness, where she could neither see plainly nor be seen.

When the Knight saw that she was trying to escape, he sprang after her as fierce as a lion, and then the great fight began. Though he strove valiantly, yet he was in sore peril, for suddenly the cunning creature flung her huge tail round and round him, so that he could stir neither hand nor foot.

Then the Lady Una cried out, to encourage him, "Now, now, Sir Knight, show what you are! Add faith unto your force, and be not faint! Kill her, or else she will surely kill you."

With that, fresh strength and courage came to the Knight. Gathering all his force, he got one hand free, and gripped the creature by the throat with so much pain that she was soon compelled to loosen her wicked hold. Then, seeing that she could not hope to conquer in this way, she suddenly tried to stifle the Knight by flinging over him a flood of poison. This made the Knight retreat a moment; then she called to her aid all the horrid little creeping and crawling monsters that he had seen before, and many others of the same kind, or worse. These came swarming and buzzing round the Knight like a cloud of teasing gnats, and tormented and confused him with their feeble stings. Enraged at this fresh attack, he made up his mind to end the matter one way or another, and, rushing at his foe, he killed her with one stroke of his sword.

Then Lady Una, who, from a distance, had watched all that passed, came near in haste to greet his victory.

"Fair Knight," she said, "born under happy star! You are well worthy of that armour in which this day you have won great glory, and proved your strength against a strong enemy. This is your first battle. I pray that you will win many others in like manner."

The Knight Deceived by the Magician

After his victory over Falsehood, the Red Cross Knight again mounted his steed, and he and the Lady Una went on their way. Keeping carefully to one path, and turning neither to the right hand nor the left, at last they found themselves safely out of the Wood of Error.

But now they were to fall into the power of a more dangerous and treacherous foe than even the hateful monster, Falsehood.

They had travelled a long way, and met with no fresh adventure, when at last they chanced to meet in the road an old man. He looked very wise and good. He was dressed in a long black gown, like a hermit, and had bare feet and a grey beard; he had a book hanging from his belt, as was the custom with scholars in those days. He seemed very quiet and sad, and kept his eyes fixed on the ground, and all the time, as he went along, he seemed to be saying prayers, and lamenting over his own wickedness.

When he saw the travellers he made a very humble salute to them. The Red Cross Knight returned the greeting with all courtesy, and asked him if he knew of any strange adventures that were then taking place.

"Ah, my dear son!" said the hermit "how should a simple old man, who lives in a lonely cell, and does nothing all day but

sorrow for his own faults— how should such a man know any tidings of war or worldly trouble? It is not fitting for me to meddle with such matters. But, if indeed you desire to hear about danger and evil near at hand, I can tell you about a strange man who wastes all the surrounding country."

"That," said the Knight, "is what I chiefly ask about, and I will reward you well if you will guide me to the place where he dwells. For it is a disgrace to knighthood that such a creature should be allowed to live so long."

"His dwelling is far away from here, in the midst of a barren wilderness. " answered the old man. " No living person may ever pass it without great danger and difficulty."

"Now," said the Lady Una, "night is drawing near, and I know well that you are wearied with your former fight. Therefore, take rest, and with the new day begin new work."

"You have been well advised, Sir Knight," said the old man. "Day is now spent; therefore take up your abode with me for this night."

The travellers were well content to do this, so they went with the apparently good old man to his home.

It was a little lowly hermitage, down in a dale by the side of a forest, far from the beaten track of travellers. A small chapel was built near, and close by a crystal stream gently welled forth from a never- failing fountain.

Arrived at the house, they neither expected nor found any entertainment; but rest was what they chiefly needed, and they were well satisfied, for the noblest mind is always the best contented. The old man had a good store of pleasing words, and knew well how to fit his talk to suit his visitors. The evening passed pleasantly, and then the hermit conducted his guests to the lodgings where they were to spend the night.

But when they were safely asleep a horrid change came over the old man, for in reality he was not good at all, although he pretended to be so. His heart was full of hatred, malice, and deceit. He called himself Archimago, which means a "Great Magician " but his real name was Hypocrisy. He knew that as long as Holiness and Truth kept together, no great harm could come to either of them; so he determined to do everything in his power to separate them. For this purpose he got out all his books of magic, and set to work to devise cunning schemes and spells. He was so clever and wily that he could deceive people much better and wiser than himself. He also had at his bidding many bad little spirits, who ran about and did his messages; these he used to help his friends and frighten his enemies, and he had the power of making them take any shape he wished.

Choosing out two of the worst of these, he sent one on a message to King Morpheus, who rules over the Land of Sleep. He bade him bring back with him a bad, false dream, which Archimago then carried to the sleeping Knight. So cunningly did he contrive the matter, that when the Knight awoke the next morning he never knew that it had only been a dream, but believed that all the things he had seen in his sleep had really happened.

In the meanwhile, Archimago dressed up the other bad spirit to look like Una, so that at a little distance it was impossible to tell any difference in the two figures. He knew that the only way to part Holiness and Truth was to make Holiness believe by some means that Truth was not as good as she appeared to be. He knew also that the Red Cross Knight would believe nothing against the Lady Una except what he saw with his own eyes. Therefore he laid his plans with the greatest care and guile.

Now we shall see how he succeeded in his wicked endeavour.

The Knight Forsakes Una

The next morning at daybreak the Knight awoke, sad and unrested after the unpleasant dreams that had come to him in the night. He did not know he had been asleep; he thought the things that troubled him had really happened.

It was scarcely dawn when Archimago rushed up to him in a state of pretended sorrow and indignation.

"The Lady Una has left you," said this wicked man. "She is not good as she pretends to be. She cares nothing at all for you, nor for the noble work on which you are bound, and she does not mean to go any farther with you on your toilsome journey."

The Red Cross Knight started up in anger. This was like his dream, and he knew not what was true nor what was false.

"Come," said Archimago, "see for yourself." He pointed to a figure in the distance whom the Knight took to be Una. Then, indeed, he was forced to believe what the wicked magician told him. He now took for granted that Una had been deceiving him all along, and had seized this moment to escape.

He forgot all her real sweetness and goodness and beauty; he only thought how false and unkind she was. He was filled with anger, and he never paused a moment to reflect if there could be any possibility of mistake. Calling his servant, he bade him bring his horse at once, and then these two immediately set forth again on their journey.

Here the Red Cross Knight was wrong, and we shall see presently into what perils and misfortunes he fell because of his hasty want of faith. If he had had a little patience he would soon have discovered that the figure he saw was only a dressed-up imitation. The real Lady Una all this time was sleeping quietly in her own bower.

When she awoke and found that her two companions had fled in the night and left her alone behind, she was filled with

grief and dismay. She could not understand why they should do such a thing. Mounting her white donkey, she rode after them with all the speed she could, but the Knight had urged on his steed so fast it was almost useless to try to follow. Yet she never stayed to rest her weary limbs, but went on seeking them over hill and dale, and through wood and plain, sorely grieved in her tender heart that the one she loved best should leave her with such ungentle discourtesy.

When the wicked Archimago saw that his cunning schemes had succeeded so well he was greatly pleased, and set to work to devise fresh mischief. It was Una whom he chiefly hated, and he took great pleasure in her many troubles, for hypocrisy always hates real goodness. He had the power of turning himself into any shape he chose — sometimes he would be a fowl, sometimes a fish, now like a fox, now like a dragon. On the present occasion, to suit his evil purpose, it seemed best to him to put on the appearance of the good knight whom he had so cruelly beguiled.

Therefore, Hypocrisy dressed himself up in imitation armour with a silver shield and everything exactly like the Red Cross Knight. When he sat upon his fiery charger he looked such a splendid warrior you would have thought it was St. George himself.

Holiness Fights Faithless, and Makes Friends with False Religion

The true St. George, meanwhile, had wandered far away. Now that he had left the Lady Una, he had nothing but his own will to guide him, and he no longer followed any fixed purpose.

Presently he saw coming to meet him another warrior, fully armed. He was a great, rough fellow, who cared nothing for God

or man; across his shield, in bold letters, was written "Sans Foy," which means Faithless.

He had with him a companion, a handsome lady, dressed all in scarlet, trimmed with gold and rich pearls. She rode a beautiful palfrey, with bright trappings, and little gold bells tinkled on her bridle. The two came along laughing and talking, but when the lady saw the Red Cross Knight, she left off her mirth at once, and bade her companion attack him.

Then the two knights levelled their spears, and rushed at each other. But when Faithless saw the red cross graven on the breastplate of the other, he knew that he could never prevail against that safeguard. However, he fought with great fury, and the Red Cross Knight had a hard battle before he overcame him. At last he managed to kill him, and he told his servant to carry away the shield of Faithless in token of victory.

When the lady saw her champion fall, she fled in terror; but the Red Cross Knight hurried after her, and bade her stay, telling her that she had nothing now to fear. His brave and gentle heart was full of pity to see her in so great distress, and he asked her to tell him who she was, and who was the man that had been with her.

Melting into tears, she then told him the following sad story: — She said that she was the daughter of an emperor, and had been engaged to marry a wise and good prince. Before the wedding-day, however, the prince fell into the hands of his foes, and was cruelly slain. She went out to look for his dead body, and in the course of her wandering met the Saracen knight, who took her captive. "Sans Foy " was one of three bad brothers. The names of the others were "Sans Loy," which means Lawless, and "Sans Joy," which means Joyless. She further said that her own name was "Fidessa," or True Religion, and she besought the Knight to have compassion on her, because she was so friendless and unhappy.

"Fair lady," said the Knight, "a heart of flint would grieve to hear of your sorrows. But henceforth rest safely assured that you have found a new friend to help you, and lost an old foe to hurt you. A new friend is better than an old foe."

Then the seemingly simple maiden pretended to look comforted, and the two rode on happily together.

But what the lady had told about herself was quite untrue. Her name was not "Fidessa" at all, but "Duessa," which means False Religion. If Una had still been with the Knight, he would never have been led astray; but when he parted from her he had nothing but his own feelings to guide him. He still meant to do right, but he was deceived by his false companion, who brought him into much trouble and danger.

Una and the Lion

All this while the Lady Una, lonely and forsaken, was roaming in search of her lost Knight. How sad was her fate! She, a King's daughter, so beautiful, so faithful, so true, who had done no wrong either in word or deed, was left sorrowful and deserted because of the cunning wiles of a wicked enchanter. Fearing nothing, she sought the Red Cross Knight through woods and lonely wilderness, but no tidings of him ever came to her.

One day, being weary, she alighted from her steed, and lay down on the grass to rest. It was in the midst of a thicket, far from the sight of any traveller. She lifted her veil, and put aside the black cloak which always covered her dress.

"Her angel's face,
As the great eye of Heaven shined bright,
And made a sunshine in the shady place."

Suddenly, out of the wood there rushed a fierce lion, who, seeing Una, sprang at her to devour her; but, when he came nearer, he was amazed at the sight of her loveliness, and all his

rage turned to pity. Instead of tearing her to pieces, he kissed her weary feet and licked her lily hand as if he knew how innocent and wronged she was.[1]

When Una saw the gentleness of this kingly creature, she could not help weeping.

Sad to see her sorrow, he stood gazing at her; all his angry mood changed to compassion, till at last Una mounted her snowy palfrey and once more set out to seek her lost companion.

The lion would not leave her desolate, but went with her as a strong guard and as a faithful companion. When she slept he kept watch, and when she waked he waited diligently, ready to help her in any way he could. He always knew by from her looks what she wanted. Long she travelled thus through lonely places, where she thought her wandering Knight might pass, yet never found trace of living man. At length she came to the foot of a steep mountain, where the trodden grass showed that there was a path for people to go. This path she followed till at last she saw, slowly walking in the front of her, a damsel carrying a jar of water.

The Lady Una called to her to ask if there were any dwelling-place near, but the rough-looking girl made no answer; she seemed not able to speak, nor hear, nor understand. But when she saw the lion standing beside her, she threw down her pitcher with sudden fear and fled away. Never before in that land had she seen the face of a fair lady, and the sight of the lion filled her with terror. Fast away she fled, and never looked behind till she came at last to her home, where her blind mother sat all day in darkness. Too frightened to speak, she caught hold of her mother with trembling hands, while the poor old woman, full of fear, ran to shut the door of their house.

[1]The figure of the lion may be taken as the emblem of Honour, which always pays respect to Truth.

By this time the weary Lady Una had arrived, and asked if she might come in; but, when no answer came to her request, the lion, with his strong claws, tore open the wicket-door and let her into the little hut. There she found the mother and daughter crouched up in a dark corner, nearly dead with fear.

The name of the poor old blind woman was Superstition. She tried to be good in a very mistaken way. She hid herself in her dark corner, and was quite content never to come out of it. When the beautiful Lady Una, who was all light and truth, came to the hut, the mother and daughter, instead of making her welcome, hated her, and would gladly have thrust her out.

Trying to soothe their needless dread, Una spoke gently to them, and begged that she might rest that night in their small cottage. To this they unwillingly agreed, and Una lay down with the faithful lion at her feet to keep watch. All night, instead of sleeping, she wept, still sorrowing for her lost Knight and longing for the morning.

In the middle of the night, when all the inmates of the little cottage were asleep, there came a furious knocking at the door. This was a wicked thief, called " Kirkrapine," or Church-robber, whose custom it was to go about stealing ornaments from churches, and clothes from clergymen, and robbing the alms-boxes of the poor. He used to share his spoils with the daughter of the blind woman, and tonight he had come with a great sackful of stolen goods.

When he received no answer to his knocking, he got very angry indeed, and made a loud clamour at the door; but the women in the hut were too much afraid of the lion to rise and let him in. At last he burst open the door in a great rage and tried to enter, but the lion sprang upon him and tore him to pieces before he could even call for help. His terrified friends scarcely dared to weep or move in case they should share his fate.

When daylight came, Una rose and started again on her journey with the lion to seek the wandering Knight. As soon as they had left, the two frightened women came forth, and, finding Church-robber slain outside the cottage, they began to wail and lament; then they ran after Una, railing at her for being the cause of all their ill; they called after her evil wishes that mischief and misery might fall on her and follow her all the way, and that she might ever wander in endless error.

When they saw that their bad words were of no avail, they turned back, and there in the road they met a knight, clad in armour; but, though he looked such a grand warrior, it was really only the wicked enchanter, Hypocrisy, who was seeking Una, in order to work her fresh trouble. When he saw the old woman, Superstition, he asked if she could give him any tidings of the lady. Therewith her passion broke out anew; she told him what had just happened, blaming Una as the cause of all her distress. Archimago pretended to condole with her, and then, finding out the direction in which Una had gone, he followed as quickly as possible.

Before long he came up to where Una was slowly travelling; but seeing the noble lion at her side, he was afraid to go too near, and turned away to a hill at a little distance. When Una saw him, she thought, from his shield and armour, that it was her own true knight, and she rode up to him, and spoke meekly, half-frightened.

"Ah, my lord," she said, "where have you been so long out of my sight? I feared that you hated me, or that I had done something to displease you, and that made everything seem dark and cheerless. But welcome now, welcome!"

"My dearest lady," said false Hypocrisy, "you must not think I could so shame knighthood as to desert you. But the truth is, the reason why I left you so long was to seek adventure in a strange place, where Archimago said there was a mighty robber,

who worked much mischief to many people. Now he will trouble no one further. This is the good reason why I left you. Pray believe it, and accept my faithful service, for I have vowed to defend you by land and sea. Let your grief be over."

In the Hands of the Enemy

When Una heard these sweet words it seemed to her that she was fully rewarded for all the trials she had gone through. One loving hour can make up for many years of sorrow. She forgot all that she had suffered; she spoke no more of the past. True love never looks back, but always forward. Before her stood her Knight, for whom she had toiled so sorely, and Una's heart was filled with joy.

Una and the Magician (who was disguised as the Red Cross Knight) had not gone far when they saw some one riding swiftly towards them. The newcomer was on a fleet horse, and was fully armed; his look was stern, cruel, and revengeful. On his shield in bold letters was traced the name "Sans Loy," which means Lawless. He was one of the brothers of "Sans Foy," or Faithless, whom the real Red Cross Knight had slain, and he had made up his mind to avenge his brother's death.

When he saw the red cross graven on the shield which Hypocrisy carried, he thought that he had found the foe of whom he was in search, and, levelling his spear, he prepared for battle. Hypocrisy, who was a mean coward, and had never fought in his life, was nearly fainting with fear; but the Lady Una spoke such cheering words that he began to feel more hopeful. Lawless, however, rushed at him with such fury that he drove his lance right through the other's shield and bore him to the ground. Leaping from his horse, he ran towards him, meaning to kill him, and exclaiming, "Lo, this is the worthy reward of him that slew Faithless!"

Una begged the cruel knight to have pity on his fallen foe, but her words were of no avail. Tearing off his helmet, Lawless would have slain him at once, but he stopped in astonishment when, instead of the Red Cross Knight, he saw the face of Archimago. He knew well that crafty Hypocrisy was skilled in all forms of deceit, but that he took care to shun fighting and brave deeds. Now, indeed, had Hypocrisy's guile met with a just punishment.

"Why, luckless Archimago, what is this?" cried Lawless. "What evil chance brought you here? Is it your fault, or my mistake, that I have wounded my friend instead of my foe? "

But the old Magician answered nothing; he lay still as if he were dying. So Lawless spent no more time over him, but went over to where Una waited, lost in amazement and sorely perplexed.

Her companion, whom she had imagined was her own true Knight, turned out to be nothing but an impostor, and she herself had fallen into the hands of a cruel enemy.

When the brave lion saw Lawless go up to Una and try to drag her roughly from her palfrey, full of kingly rage he rushed to protect her. He flew at Lawless and almost tore his shield to pieces with his sharp claws. But, alas! he could not overcome the warrior, for Lawless was one of the strongest men that ever wielded spear, and was well skilled in feats of arms. With his sharp sword he struck the lion, and the noble creature fell dead at his feet.

Poor Una, what was to become of her now? Her faithful guardian was gone, and she found herself the captive of a cruel foe. Lawless paid no heed to her tears and entreaties. Placing her on his own horse, he rode off with her; while her snow-white donkey, not willing to forsake her, followed meekly at a distance.

The House of Pride

Now the Red Cross Knight, because of his lack of loyalty to Una, fell into much danger and difficulty. His first fault was in believing evil of her so readily, and leaving her forlorn; after that he was too easily beguiled by the pretended goodness and beauty of Duessa. All who fight in a good cause must beware of errors such as these. If matters do not go exactly as we wish, we must not lose heart and get impatient; even if we cannot understand what is happening, we must trust that all will be well. We must keep steadily to the one true aim set before us, or else, like the Red Cross Knight, we may be led astray by false things that are only pleasant in appearance, and have no real goodness.

Duessa and the Knight travelled for a long way, till at last they saw in front of them a grand and beautiful building. It seemed as if it were the house of some mighty Prince; a broad highway led up to it, all trodden bare by the feet of those who flocked thither. Great troops of people of all sorts and condition journeyed here, both by day and night. But few returned, unless they managed to escape, beggared and disgraced, when, ever afterwards, they lived a life of misery.

To this place Duessa guided the Red Cross Knight, for she was tired with the toilsome journey, and the day was nearly over.

It was a stately palace, built of smooth bricks, cunningly laid together without mortar. The walls were high, but neither strong nor thick, and they were covered with dazzling gold-foil. There were many lofty towers and picturesque galleries, with bright windows and delightful bowers; and on the top there was a dial to tell the time.

It was lovely to look at, and did much credit to the workman that designed it; but it was a great pity that so fair a building rested on so frail a foundation. For it was mounted high up on a sandy hill that kept shifting and falling away. Every breath of

heaven made it shake; and all the back parts, that no one could see, were old and ruinous, though cunningly painted over.

Arrived here, Duessa and the Red Cross Knight passed in at once, for the gates stood wide open to all. They were in charge of a porter, called "Ill-come," who never denied entrance to any one. The hall inside was hung with costly tapestry and rich curtains. Numbers of people, rich and poor, were waiting here, in order to gain sight of the Lady of this wonderful place.

Duessa and the Knight passed through this crowd, who all gazed at them, and entered the Presence Chamber of the Queen.

What a dazzling sight met their eyes! Such a scene of splendour had never been known in the court of any living prince. A noble company of lords and ladies stood on every side, and made the place more beautiful with their presence.

High above all there was a cloth of state, and a rich throne as bright as the sun. On the throne, clad in royal robes, sat the Queen. Her garments were all glittering with gold and precious jewels; but so great was her beauty that it dimmed even the brightness of her throne. She sat there in princely state, shining like the sun. She hated and despised all lowly things of earth. Under her scornful feet lay a dreadful dragon, with a hideous tail. In her hand she held a mirror in which she often looked at her face; she took great delight in her own appearance, for she was fairer than any living woman.

She was the daughter of grisly Pluto, King of Hades, and men called her proud Lucifera. She had crowned herself a queen, but she had no rightful kingdom at all, nor any possessions. The power which she had obtained she had usurped by wrong and tyranny. She ruled her realm not by laws, but by craft, and according to the advice of six old wizards, who with their bad counsels upheld her kingdom.

As soon as the Knight and Duessa came into the presence-chamber, an usher, by name Vanity, made room and prepared a passage for them, and brought them to the lowest stair of the high throne. Here they made a humble salute, and declared that they had come to see the Queen's royal state, and to prove if the wide report of her great splendour were true.

With scornful eyes, half unwilling to look so low, she thanked them disdainfully, and did not show them any courtesy worthy of a queen, scarcely even bidding them arise. The lords and ladies of the court, however, were all eager to appear well in the eyes of the strangers. They shook out their ruffles, and fluffed up their curls, and arranged their attire more trimly; and each one was jealous and spiteful of the others.

They did their best to entertain the Knight, and would gladly have made him one of their company. To Duessa, also, they were most polite and gracious, for formerly she had been well known in that court. But to the knightly eyes of the warrior all the glitter of the crowd seemed vain and worthless, and he thought that it was unbefitting so great a queen to treat a strange knight with such scant courtesy.

Suddenly, Queen Lucifera rose from her throne, and called for her coach. Then all was bustle and confusion, every one rushing violently forth. Blazing with brightness she paced down the hall, like the sun dawning in the east. All the people thronging the hall thrust and pushed each other aside to gaze upon her. Her glorious appearance amazed the eyes of all men.

Her coach was adorned with gold andemerald garlands, and was one of the most splendid carriages ever seen, but it was drawn by an ugly and ill-matched team. On every animal rode one of her evil Councillors, who was much like in nature to the creature that carried him.

The first of these, who guided all the rest, was Idleness, the nurse of Sin. He chose to ride a slothful animal; he looked

always as if he were half asleep, and as if he did not know whether it were night or day. He shut himself away from all care, and shunned manly exercise, but if there were any mischief to be done he joined in it readily. The Queen was indeed badly served who had Idleness for her leading Councillor.

Next to him came Gluttony, riding on a pig; then Self-indulgence on a goat, Avarice on a camel, Envy on a wolf, and Wrath on a lion. Each in his own way was equally hideous and hateful.

As they went along, crowds of people came round, shouting for joy; always before them a foggy mist sprang up, covering all the land, and under their feet lay the dead bones of men who had wandered from the right path.

So forth they went in this goodly array to enjoy the fresh air, and to sport in the flowery meadows. Among the rest, next to the chariot, rode the false Duessa, but the good Knight kept far apart, not joining in the noisy mirth which seemed unbefitting a true warrior.

Having enjoyed themselves awhile in the pleasant fields, they returned to the stately palace. Here they found that a wandering knight had just arrived. On his shield, in red letters, was written the name "Sans Joy," which means Joyless, and he was the brother of Faithless, whom the Red Cross Knight had slain, and of Lawless, who had taken Una captive. He looked sullen and revengeful, as if he had in his mind bitter and angry thoughts.

When he saw the shield of his slain brother, Faithless, in the hands of the Red Cross Knight's page, he sprang at him and snatched it away. But the Knight had no mind to lose the trophy which he had won in battle, and, attacking him fiercely, he again got possession of it.

Thereupon they hastily began to prepare for battle, clashing their shields and shaking their swords in the air. But the Queen, on pain of her severe displeasure, commanded them to restrain their fury, saying that if either had a right to the shield, they should fight it out fairly the next day.

That night was passed in joy and partying, feasting and making merry in bower and hall. The steward of the court was Gluttony, who poured forth lavishly of his abundance to all; and then the chamberlain, Sloth, summoned them to rest.

The Battle for the Shield

That night, when every one slept, Duessa stole secretly to the lodgings of the pagan knight Joyless. She found him wide awake, restless, and troubled, busily devising how he might annoy his foe. To him she spoke many untrue words.

"Dear Joyless," she said, "I am so glad that you have come. I have passed many sad hours for the sake of Faithless, whom this traitor slew. He has treated me very cruelly, keeping me shut up in a dark cave; but now I will take shelter with you from his disdainful spite. To you belongs the inheritance of your brother, Faithless. Let him not be unavenged."

"Fair lady, grieve no more for past sorrows," said Joyless; "neither be afraid of present peril, for needless fear never profited any one, nor is it any good to lament over misfortunes that cannot be helped. Faithless is dead, his troubles are over; but I live, and I will avenge him."

"Oh, but I fear what may happen," she answered, "and the advantage is on his side."

"Why, lady, what advantage can there be when both fight alike? " asked Joyless.

"Yes, but he bears a charmed shield," said Duessa, "and also enchanted armour that no one can pierce. None can wound the man that wears them."

"Charmed or enchanted, I care not at all," said Joyless fiercely, "nor need you tell me anything more about them. But, fair lady, go back whence you came and rest awhile. Tomorrow I shall subdue the Red Cross Knight, and give you the heritage of dead Faithless."

"Wherever I am, my secret aid shall follow you," she answered, and then she left him.

At the first gleam of dawn the Red Cross Knight sprang up and dressed himself for battle in his sunbright armour. Forth he stepped into the hall, where there were many waiting to gaze at him, curious to know what fate was in store for the stranger knight. Many minstrels were there, making melody to drive away sadness; many singers that could tune their voices skilfully to harp and viol; many chroniclers that could tell old stories of love and war.

Soon after, came the pagan knight, Joyless, warily armed in woven mail. He looked sternly at the Red Cross Knight, who cared not at all how any living creature looked at him. Cups of wine were brought to the warriors, with dainty Eastern spices, and they both swore a solemn oath to observe faithfully the laws of just and fair fighting.

At last, with royal pomp, came the Queen. She was led to a railed-in space of the green field, and placed under a stately canopy. On the other side, full in all men's view, sat Duessa, and on a tree near was hung the shield of Faithless. Both Duessa and the shield were to be given to the victor.

A shrill trumpet bade them prepare for battle. The pagan knight was stout and strong, and his blows fell like great iron hammers. He fought for cruelty and vengeance. The Red Cross

Knight was fierce, and full of youthful courage; he fought for praise and honour. So furious was their onslaught that sparks of fire flew from their shields, and deep marks were hewn in their helmets.

Thus they fought, the one for wrong, the other for right, and each tried to put his foe to shame. At last Joyless chanced to look at his brother's shield which was hanging near. The sight of this doubled his anger, and he struck at his foe with such fury that the Knight reeled twice, and seemed likely to fall. To those who looked on, the end of the battle appeared doubtful, and false Duessa began to call loudly to Joyless, —

"Thine the shield, and I, and all!"

Directly the Red Cross Knight heard her voice he woke out of the faintness that had overcome him; his faith, which had grown weak, suddenly became strong, and he shook off the deadly cold that was creeping over him.

This time he attacked Joyless with such vigour that he brought him down upon his knees. Lifting his sword, he would have slain him, when suddenly a dark cloud fell between them. Joyless was seen no more; he had vanished! The Knight called aloud to him, but received no answer: his foe was completely hidden by the darkness.

Duessa rose hastily from her place, and ran to the Red Cross Knight, saying, —

"O noblest Knight, be angry no longer! Some evil power has covered your enemy with the cloud of night, and borne him away to the regions of darkness. The conquest is yours, I am yours, the shield and the glory are yours."

Then the trumpets sounded, and running heralds made humble homage, and the shield, the cause of all the enmity, was brought to the Red Cross Knight. He went to the Queen, and,

kneeling before her, offered her his service, which she accepted with thanks and much satisfaction, greatly praising his chivalry.

So they marched home, the Knight next the Queen, while all the people followed with great glee, shouting and clapping their hands. When they got to the palace the Knight was given gentle attendants and skilled doctors, for he had been badly hurt in the fight. His wounds were washed with wine, and oil, and healing herbs, and all the while lovely music was played round his bed to beguile him from grief and pain.

While this was happening, Duessa secretly left the palace, and stole away to the Kingdom of Darkness, which is ruled over by the Queen of Night. This queen was a friend of her own, and was always ready to help in any bad deeds. Duessa told her of what had befallen the pagan knight. Joyless, and persuaded her to carry him away to her own dominions. Here he was placed under the care of a wonderful doctor, who was able to cure people by magic, and Duessa hastened back to the House of Pride.

When she got there she was dismayed to find that the Red Cross Knight had already left, although he was not nearly healed from the wounds which he had received in battle.

The reason why he left was this. One day his servant, whose name you may remember was Prudence, came and told him that he had discovered in the palace a huge, deep dungeon, full of miserable prisoners. Hundreds of men and women were there, wailing and lamenting — grand lords and beautiful ladies, who, from foolish behaviour or love of idle pomp, had wasted their wealth and fallen into the power of the wicked Queen of Pride.

When the good Red Cross Knight heard this, he determined to stay no longer in such a place of peril.

Rising before dawn, he left by a small side door, for he knew that if he were seen he would be at once put to death. To him

the place no more seemed beautiful; it filled him with horror and disgust. Riding under the castle wall, the way was strewn with hundreds of dead bodies of those who had perished miserably. Such was the dreadful sight of the House of Pride.

Una and the Woodland Knight

We left Una in a piteous plight, in the hands of a cruel enemy, the pagan knight Lawless.

Paying no heed to her tears and entreaties, he placed her on his horse, and rode off with her till he came to a great forest.

Una was almost in despair, for there seemed no hope of any rescue. But suddenly there came a wonderful way of deliverance.

In the midst of the thick wood Lawless halted to rest. This forest was inhabited by numbers of strange wild creatures, quite untaught, almost savages. Hearing Una's cries for help, they came flocking up to see what was the matter. Their fierce, rough appearance so frightened Lawless that he jumped on to his horse and rode away as fast as he could.

When the wild wood-folk came up they found Una sitting desolate and alone. They were amazed at such a strange sight, and pitied her sad condition.

They all stood astonished at her loveliness, and could not imagine how she had come there.

Una, for her part, was greatly terrified, not knowing whether some fresh danger awaited her. Half in fear, half in hope, she sat still in amazement. Seeing that she looked so sorrowful, the savages tried to show that they meant to be friendly. They smiled, and came forward gently, and kissed her feet. Then she guessed that their hearts were kind, and she arose fearlessly and went with them, no longer afraid of any evil.

Full of gladness, they led her along, shouting and singing and dancing round her, and strewing all the ground with green branches, as if she had been a queen. Thus they brought her to their chief, old Sylvanus.

When Sylvanus saw her, like the rest he was astonished at her beauty, for he had never seen anything so fair. Her fame spread through the forest, and all the other dwellers in it came to look at her. The Hamadryads, who live in the trees, and the Naiades, who live in the flowing fountains, all came flocking to see her lovely face. As for the woodlanders, henceforth they thought no one on earth fair but Una.

Glad at such good fortune, Una was quite contented to please the simple folk. She stayed a long while with them, to gather strength after her many troubles. During this time she did her best to teach them, but the poor things were so ignorant, it was almost impossible to make them understand the difference between right and wrong.

It chanced one day that a noble knight came to the forest to seek his kindred who dwelt there. He had won much glory in wars abroad, and distant lands were filled with his fame. He was honest, faithful, and true, though not very polished in manner, nor accustomed to a courtly life. His name was Sir Satyrane. He had been bom and brought up in the forest, and his father had taught him nothing but to be utterly fearless. When he grew up, and could master everything in the forest, he went abroad to fight foreign foes, and his fame was soon carried through all lands. It was always his custom, after some time spent in labour and adventure, to return for a while to his native woods, and so it happened on this occasion that he came across Una.

The first time he saw her she was surrounded by the savages, whom she was trying to teach good and holy things. Sir Satyrane wondered at the wisdom which fell from her sweet lips, and when, later on, he saw her gentle and kindly deeds, he began to

admire and love her. Although noble at heart, he had never had any one to teach him, but now he began to learn from Una faith and true religion.

The False Pilgrim

Una's thoughts were still fixed on the Red Cross Knight, and she was sorry to think of his perilous wandering. She was always sad at heart, and spent her time planning how to escape. At last she told her wish to Sir Satyrane, who, glad to please her in any way, began to devise how he could help her to get free from the savage folk. One day, when Una was left alone, all the woodlanders having gone to pay court to their chief, old Sylvanus, she and Sir Satyrane rode away together. They went so fast and so carefully that no one could overtake them, and thus at last they came to the end of the forest, and out into the open plain.

Towards evening, after they had journeyed a long distance, they met a traveller. He seemed as if he were a poor, simple pilgrim; his clothes were dusty and travel-worn; his face brown and scorched with the sun; he leant upon a staff, and carried all his necessaries in a scrip, or little bag, hanging behind.

Sir Satyrane asked if there were any tidings of new adventures, but the stranger had heard of none. Then Una began to ask if he knew anything about a knight who wore on his shield a red cross.

"Alas! dear lady," he replied, "I may well grieve to tell you the sad news! I have seen that knight with my own eyes, both alive and also dead."

When Una heard these cruel words she was filled with sorrow and dismay, and begged the pilgrim to tell her everything he knew.

Then he related how on that very morning he had seen two knights preparing for battle. One was a pagan, the other was the Red Cross Knight. They fought with great fury, and in the end the Red Cross Knight was slain.

This story was altogether false. The pretended pilgrim was no other than the wicked enchanter Archimago, or Hypocrisy, in a fresh disguise. But Sir Satyrane and Una believed everything he told them.

"Where is this pagan now?" asked Satyrane.

"Not far from here," replied the pilgrim; "I left him resting beside a fountain."

Thereupon Sir Satyrane hastily marched off, and soon came to the place where he guessed that the other would be found. This pagan knight turned out to be Lawless, from whom, you may remember, Una had escaped in the forest, before she was found by the woodlanders. Sir Satyrane challenged Lawless to fight, and they were soon engaged in a fierce battle. Poor Una was so terrified at this new peril, and in such dread of Lawless, that she did not wait to see what the end would be, but fled far away as fast as she could.

Archimago had been watching everything from a secret hiding-place. Now, when he saw Una escaping, he quickly followed, for he hoped to be able to work her some further mischief.

When Duessa found that the Red Cross Knight had left the palace of Queen Lucifera, she immediately set out in search of him. It was not long before she found him where he sat wearily by the side of a fountain to rest himself. He had taken off all his armour, and his steed was cropping the grass close by. It was pleasant in the cool shade, and the soft wind blew refreshingly upon his forehead, while, in the trees above, numbers of singing birds delighted him with their sweet music.

Duessa at first pretended to be angry with the Knight for leaving her so unkindly, but they were soon good friends again. They stayed for some time beside the fountain, where the green boughs sheltered them from the scorching heat. But although it looked so lovely and tempting, the fountain near which they sat was an enchanted one. Whoever tasted its waters grew faint and feeble. The Knight, not knowing this, stooped down to drink of the stream, which was as clear as crystal. Then all his strength turned to weakness, his courage melted away, and a deadly chill crept over him.

At first he scarcely noticed the change, for he had grown careless both of himself and of his fame. But suddenly he heard a dreadful sound — a loud bellowing which echoed through the wood. The earth seemed to shake with terror, and all the trees trembled. The Knight, astounded, started up, and tried to seize his weapons. But before he could put on his armour, or get his shield, his monstrous enemy came stalking into sight.

It was a hideous Giant, great and horrible. The ground groaned under him. He was taller than three of the tallest men put together. His name was Orgoglio, or Pride, and his father's name was Ignorance. He was puffed up with arrogance and conceit, and because he was so big and strong he despised everyone else. He leant upon a gnarled oak, which he had torn up by its roots from the earth; it also served him as a weapon to dismay his foemen.

When he saw the Knight he advanced to him with dreadful fury. The latter, quite helpless, all in vain tried to prepare for battle. Disarmed, disgraced, inwardly dismayed, and faint in every limb, he could scarcely wield even his useless blade. The Giant aimed such a merciless stroke at him, that if it had touched him it would have crushed him to powder. But the Knight leapt lightly to one side, and thus escaped the blow. So great, however, was the wind that the club made in whirling

through the air that the Knight was overthrown, and lay on the ground stunned.

When Giant Pride saw his enemy lying helpless, he lifted up his club to kill him, but Duessa called to him to stay his hand.

"O great Orgoglio," she cried, "spare him for my sake, and do not kill him. Now that he is vanquished make him your bond-slave, and, if you like, I will be your wife! "

Giant Pride was quite pleased with this arrangement, and, taking up the Red Cross Knight before he could awake from his swoon, he carried him hastily to his castle, and flung him, without pity, into a deep dungeon.

As for Duessa, from that day forth she was treated with the greatest honour. She was given gold and purple to wear, and a triple crown was placed upon her head, and every one had to obey her as if she were a queen. To make her more dreaded, Orgoglio gave her a hideous dragon to ride. This dragon had seven heads, with gleaming eyes, and its body seemed made of iron and brass. Everything good that came within its reach it swept away with a great long tail, and then trampled under foot.

All the people's hearts were filled with terror when they saw Duessa riding on her dragon.

Prince Arthur

When the Red Cross Knight was made captive by Giant Pride and carried away Prudence, his servant, who had seen his master's fall, sorrowfully collected his forsaken possessions — his mighty armour, missing when most needed, his silver shield, now idle and masterless, his sharp spear that had done good service in many a fray. With these he departed to tell his sad tale.

He had not gone far when he met Una, flying from the scene of battle, while Sir Satyrane hindered Lawless from pursuing her.

When she saw Prudence carrying the armour of the Red Cross Knight, she guessed something terrible had happened, and fell to the ground as if she were dying of sorrow.

Unhappy Prudence would gladly have died himself, but he did his best to restore Una to life. When she had recovered she implored him to tell her what had occurred.

Then the dwarf told her everything that had taken place since they parted. How the crafty Archimago had deceived the Red Cross Knight by his wiles, and made him believe that Una had left him; how the Knight had slain Faithless and had taken pity on Duessa because of the false tales she told. Prudence also told Una all about the House of Pride and its perils; he described the fight which the Knight had with Joyless, and lastly, he told about the luckless conflict with the great Giant Pride, when the Knight was made captive, whether living or dead he knew not.

Una listened patiently, and bravely tried to master her sorrow, which almost broke her heart, for she dearly loved the Red Cross Knight, for whose sake she had borne so many troubles. At last she rose, quite resolved to find him, alive or dead. The dwarf pointed out the way by which Giant Pride had carried his prisoner, and Una started on her quest. Long she wandered, through woods and across valleys, high over hills, and low among the dales, tossed by storms and beaten by the wind, but still keeping steadfast to her purpose.

At last she chanced by good fortune to meet a knight, marching with his squire. This knight was the most glorious she had ever seen. His glittering armour shone far off, like the glancing light of the brightest ray of sunshine; it covered him from top to toe, and left no place unguarded. Across his breast he wore a splendid belt, covered with jewels that sparkled like stars. Among the jewels was one of great value, which shone with such brilliancy that it amazed all who beheld it. Close to

this jewel hung the knight's sword, in an ivory sheath, carved with curious devices. The hilt was of burnished gold, the handle of mother-of-pearl, and it was buckled on with a golden clasp.

The helmet of this knight was also of gold, and for crest it had a golden dragon with wings. On the top of all was a waving plume, decked with sprinkled pearls, which shook and danced in every little breath of wind.

The shield of the warrior was closely covered, and might never be seen by mortal eye. It was not made of steel nor of brass, but of one perfect and entire diamond. This had been hewn out of the adamant rock with mighty engines; no point of spear could ever pierce it, nor dint of sword break it asunder.

This shield the knight never showed to mortals, unless he wished to dismay some huge monster or to frighten large armies that fought unfairly against him. No magic arts nor enchanter's spell had any power against it. Everything that was not exactly what it seemed to be faded before it and fell to ruin.

The maker of the shield was supposed to be Merlin, a mighty magician; he made it with the sword and armour for this young prince when the latter first took to arms.

The name of the knight was Prince Arthur, type of all Virtue and Magnificence, and pattern of all true Knighthood.

His squire bore after him his spear of ebony wood; he was a gallant and noble youth, who managed his fiery steed with much skill and courage.

When Prince Arthur came near Una, he greeted her with much courtesy. By her unwilling answers he guessed that some secret sorrow was troubling her, and he hoped that his gentle and kindly words would persuade her to tell him the cause of her grief.

"What good will it do to speak of it?" said Una. "When I think of my sorrow it seems to me better to keep it hidden than

to make it worse by speaking of it. Nothing in the world can lighten my misfortunes. My last comfort is to be left alone to weep for them."

"Ah, dear lady," said the gentle Knight, "I know well that your grief is great, for it makes me sad even to hear you speak of it. But let me entreat you to tell me what is troubling you. Misfortunes may be overcome by good advice, and wise counsel will lessen the worst injury. He who never tells of his hurts will never find help."

His words were so kind and reasonable that Una was soon persuaded to tell him her whole story. She began with the time when she had gone to the Court of Queen Gloriana to seek a champion to release her parents from the horrible dragon, and ended with the account of how the Red Cross Knight had fallen a prey to Giant Pride, who now held him captive in a dark dungeon.

"Truly, lady, you have much cause to grieve," said Prince Arthur when the story was finished. "But be of good cheer, and take comfort. Rest assured I will never forsake you until I have set free your captive Knight."

His cheerful words revived Una's drooping heart, and so they set forth on their journey, Prudence guiding him in the right way.

The Wondrous Bugle and the Mighty Shield

Badly indeed would it now have fared with the Red Cross Knight had it not been for the Lady Una. Even good people daily fall into sin and temptation, but as often as their own foolish pride or weakness leads them astray, so often will Divine love and care rescue them, if only they repent of their misdoings. Thus we see how Holiness, in the guise of the Red Cross Knight, was for a while cast down and defeated; yet in the end, because

he truly repented, help was given him to fight again and conquer.

Prince Arthur and the Lady Una travelled till they came to a castle which was built very strong and high.

"Lo," cried the dwarf, "yonder is the place where my unhappy master is held captive by that cruel tyrant! "

The Prince at once dismounted, and bade Una stay to see what would happen. He marched with his squire to the castle walls, where he found the gates shut fast. There was no warden to guard them, nor to answer to the call of any who came.

Then the squire took a small bugle which hung at his side with twisted gold tassels. Wonderful stories were told about that bugle; every one trembled with dread at its shrill sound. It could easily be heard three miles off, and whenever it was blown it echoed three times. No false enchantment or deceitful snare could stand before the terror of that blast. No gate was so strong, no lock so firm and fast, but at that piercing noise it flew open or burst.

This was the bugle which Prince Arthur's squire blew before the gate of Giant Pride. Then the whole castle quaked, and every door flew open. The Giant himself, dismayed at the sound, came rushing forth in haste from an inner bower, to see what was the reason of this sudden uproar, and to discover who had dared to brave his power. After him came Duessa, riding on her dragon with the seven heads; every head had a crown on it, and a fiery tongue of flame.

When Prince Arthur saw Giant Pride, he took his mighty shield and flew at him fiercely; the Giant lifted up his club to smite him, but the Prince leaped to one side, and the weapon, missing him, buried itself with such force in the ground, that the Giant could not quickly pull it out again. Then with his sharp

sword Prince Arthur struck at the Giant, and wounded him severely.

Duessa, seeing her companion's danger, urged forward her dragon to help him, but the brave squire sprang in between it and the Prince, and with his drawn sword drove it back. Then the angry Duessa took a golden cup, which she always carried, and which was full of a secret poison. Those who drank of that cup either died, or else felt despair seize them. She lightly sprinkled the squire with the contents of this cup, and immediately his courage faded away, and he was filled with sudden dread. He fell down before the cruel dragon, who seized him with its claws, and nearly crushed the life out of him. He had no power nor will to stir.

When Prince Arthur saw what had happened, he left Giant Pride and turned against the dragon, for he was deeply grieved to see his beloved squire in such peril. He soon drove back the horrible creature, but now once again the Giant rushed at him with his club. This time the blow struck the Prince with such force, that it bore him to the ground. In the fall, his shield, that had been covered, lost by chance its veil and flew open.

Then through the air flashed such a blazing brightness, that no eye could bear to look upon it. Giant Pride let fall the weapon with which he was just going to slay the Prince, and the dragon was struck blind, and tumbled on the ground.

"Oh, help, Orgoglio, help, or we all perish!" cried Duessa.

Gladly would Giant Pride have helped her, but all was in vain; when that light shone he had no power to hurt others, nor to defend himself; so Prince Arthur soon killed him.

When he was dead, his great body, that had seemed so big and strong, suddenly melted away, and nothing was left but what looked like the shrivelled skin of a broken balloon; for, after all, there was no real substance in him, but he was simply

puffed out with emptiness and conceit, and his grand appearance was nothing but a sham.

So that was the end of Giant Pride.

When false Duessa saw the fall of Giant Pride she flung down her golden cup, and threw aside her crown, and fled away. But the squire followed, and soon took her prisoner. Telling him to keep safe guard on her, Prince Arthur boldly entered the Giant's Castle. Not a living creature could he spy; he called loudly, but no one answered; a solemn silence reigned everywhere, not a voice was to be heard, not a person seen, in bower or hall.

At last an old, old man, with beard as white as snow, came creeping along; he guided his feeble steps with a staff, for long ago his sight had failed. On his arm he bore a bunch of keys, all covered with rust. They were the keys of all the doors inside the castle; they were never used, but he still kept possession of them.

It was curious to see the way in which this old man walked, for always, as he went forward, he kept his wrinkled face turned back, as if he were trying to look behind. He was the keeper of the place and the father of the dead Giant Pride; his name was Ignorance.

Prince Arthur, as was fitting, honoured his grey hair and gravity, and gently asked him where all the people were who used to live in that stately building. The old man softly answered him that he could not tell. Again the Prince asked where was the Knight whom the Giant had taken captive?

"I cannot tell," said the old man.

Then the Prince asked which was the way into the castle, and again he got the same answer, "I cannot tell."

At first he thought the man was mocking him, and began to be much displeased. But presently, seeing that the poor old thing could not help his foolishness, he wisely calmed his anger.

Going up to him he took the keys from his arm, and made an entrance for himself. He opened each door without the least difficulty; there was no one to challenge him, nor any bars to hinder his passage.

Inside the castle he found the whole place fitted up in the most splendid manner, decked with royal tapestry, and shining with gold, fit for the presence of the greatest prince. But all the floors were dirty, and strewn with ashes, for it was here that the wicked Giant Pride used to slay his unhappy victims.

Prince Arthur sought through every room, but nowhere could he find the Red Cross Knight. At last he came to an iron door, which was fast locked, but he found no key among the bunch to open it. In the door, however, there was a little grating, and through this the Prince called as loudly as he could, to know if there were any living person shut up there whom he could set free.

Then there came a hollow voice in answer. "Oh, who is that who brings to me the happy choice of death? Here I lie, dying every hour, yet still compelled to live, bound in horrible darkness. Three months have come and gone since I beheld the light of day. Oh, welcome, you who bring true tidings of death."

When Prince Arthur heard these words his heart was so filled with pity and horror at any noble knight being thus shamefully treated, that, in his strength and indignation, he rent open the iron door. But entering, he found no floor; there was a deep descent, as dark as a pit, from which came up a horrible deadly smell.

Neither darkness, however, nor dirt, nor poisonous smell could turn the Prince from his purpose, and he went forward courageously. With great trouble and difficulty he found means to raise the captive, whose own limbs were too feeble to bear him, and then he carried him out of the castle.

What a mournful picture was now the Red Cross Knight! His dull, sunken eyes could not bear the unaccustomed light of the sun; his cheeks were thin and gaunt; his mighty arms, that had fought so often and so bravely, were nothing now but bones; all his strength was gone, and all his flesh shrunk up like a withered flower.

When Una saw Prince Arthur carrying the Red Cross Knight out of the castle she ran to them joyfully; it made her glad even to see the Knight, but she was full of sorrow at the sight of his pale, wan face, which had formerly been radiant with the glory of youth.

"My dearest lord," she cried, "what evil star has frowned on you and changed you thus? But welcome now, in weal or woe, my dear lord whom I have lost too long! Fate, who has been our foe so long, will injure us no further, but shall pay penance with three-fold good for all these wrongs."

The unhappy man, dazed with misery, had no desire to speak of his troubles; his long-endured famine needed more relief.

"Fair lady," then said the victorious Prince, "things that were grievous to do or to bear it brings no pleasure to recall. The only good that comes from past danger is to make us wiser and more careful for the future. This day's example has deeply written this lesson on my heart — perfect happiness can never be lasting while we still live on earth.

"Henceforth, Sir Knight," he continued, "take to yourself your old strength, and master these mishaps by patience. Look where your foe lies vanquished, and the wicked woman, Duessa, the cause of all your misery, stands in your power, to let her live or die."

"To kill her would be to act unworthily," said Una, "and it would be a shame to avenge one's self on such a weak enemy. But take off her scarlet robe and let her fly!"

So they did as Una bade them. They took from Duessa all her finery — her royal robe, and purple cloak, and all the rich ornaments with which she was decked. And when this disguise was taken from her, they saw her as she really was— old, and ugly, and bad. She would no longer be able to deceive people by her pretended goodness, and youth, and beauty, for every one who saw her shrunk away in horror.

"Such," said Una, "is the face of Falsehood when its borrowed light is laid aside, and all its deceitfulness is made known."

Thus, having taken from Duessa her power to work evil, they set her free to go where she pleased. She fled to a barren wilderness, where she lurked unseen in rocks and caves, for she always hated the light .

But Prince Arthur, and the Red Cross Knight, and fair Una stayed for awhile in the castle of Giant Pride, to rest themselves and to recover their strength. And here they found a goodly store of all that was dainty and rare.

The Knight with the Hempen Rope

When the two Knights and the Lady Una had rested awhile in the castle of Giant Pride, they set out again on their journey. Before they parted. Prince Arthur and the Red Cross Knight gave each other beautiful gifts — tokens of love and friendship. Prince Arthur gave a box of adamant, embossed with gold, and richly ornamented; in it were enclosed a few drops of a precious liquid of wonderful power, which would immediately heal any wound. In return the Red Cross Knight gave the Prince a Bible, all written with golden letters, rich and beautiful.

Thus they parted, Prince Arthur to go about his own work, and the Knight to fight the terrible Dragon that was laying waste the kingdom that belonged to Una's father and mother. But she, seeing how thin and ill her champion looked, and knowing that he was still weak and weary, would not hasten forward, nor let him run the chance of any further fighting, until he had recovered his former strength.

As they travelled, they presently saw an armed knight galloping towards them. It seemed as though he were flying from a dreaded foe, or some other grisly thing. As he fled, his eyes kept looking backwards as if the object of his terror were pursuing him, and his horse flew as if it had wings to its feet.

When he came nearer they saw that his head was bare, his hair almost standing on end with fright, and his face very pale. Round his neck was a hempen rope, suiting ill with his glittering armour.

The Red Cross Knight rode up to him, but could scarcely prevail upon him to stop.

"Sir Knight," he said, "pray tell us who hath arrayed you like this, and from whom you are flying, for never saw I warrior in so unseemly a plight."

The stranger seemed dazed with fear, and at first answered nothing; but after the gentle Knight had spoken to him several times, at last he replied with faltering tongue, and trembling in every limb: "I beseech you Sir Knight, do not stop me, for lo! he comes — he comes fast after me!"

With that he again tried to run away, but the Red Cross Knight prevented him, and tried to persuade him to say what was the matter.

"Am I really safe from him who would have forced me to die?" said the stranger. "May I tell my luckless story?"

"Fear nothing," said the Knight; "no danger is near now."

Then the stranger told how he and another knight had lately been companions. The name of his friend was Sir Terwin. He was bold and brave, but because everything did not go exactly as he wished, he was not happy. One day when they were feeling very sad and comfortless, they met a man whose name was Despair. Greeting them in a friendly fashion, Despair soon contrived to find out from them what they were feeling, and then he went on to make the worst of everything. He told them there was no hope that things would get any better, and tried to persuade them to put an end to all further trouble by killing themselves. To Sir Terwin he lent a rusty knife, and to the other knight a rope. Sir Terwin, who was really very unhappy, killed himself at once; but Sir Trevisan, dismayed at the sight, fled fast away, with the rope still round his neck, half dead with fear.

"May you never hear the tempting speeches of Despair," he ended.

"How could idle talking persuade a man to put an end to his life?" said the Red Cross Knight. He was ready to despise the danger, and he trusted in his own strength to withstand it.

"I know," said the stranger, "for trial has lately taught me; nor would I go through the like again for the world's wealth. His cunning, like sweetest honey, drops into the heart, and all else is forgotten. Before one knows it, all power is secretly stolen, and only weakness remains. Oh, sir, do not wish ever to meet with Despair."

"Truly," said the Red Cross Knight, "I shall never rest till I have heard what the traitor has to say for himself. And, Sir Knight, I beg of you, as a favour, to guide me to his cabin."

"To do you a favour, I will ride back with you against my will," said Sir Trevisan; "but not for gold, nor for anything else will I remain with you when you arrive at the place. I would rather die than see his deadly face again."

In the Cave of Despair

Sir Trevisan and the Red Cross Knight soon came to the place where Despair had his dwelling. It was in a hollow cave, far underneath a craggy cliff, dark and dreary. On the top always perched a melancholy owl, shrieking his dismal note, which drove all cheerful birds far away. All around were dead and withered trees, on which no fruit nor leaf ever grew.

When they arrived, Sir Trevisan would have fled in terror, not daring to go near, but the Red Gross Knight forced him to stay, and soothed his fears.

They entered the gloomy cave, where they found a miserable man sitting on the ground, musing sullenly. He had greasy, unkempt locks, and dull and hollow eyes, and his cheeks were thin and shrunken, as if he never got enough to eat. His garment was nothing but rags, all patched, and pinned together with thorns. At his side lay the dead body of Sir Terwin, just as Sir Trevisan had told.

When the Red Cross Knight saw this sad sight, all his courage blazed up in the desire to avenge him, and he said to Despair, "Wretched man! you are the cause of this man's death. It is only just that you should pay the price of his life with your own."

"Why do you speak so rashly?" said Despair. "Does not justice teach that he should die who does not deserve to live? This man killed himself by his own wish. Is it unjust to give to each man his due? Or to let him die who hates to live longer? Or to let him die in peace who lives here in trouble? If a man travels by a weary, wandering way, and comes to a great flood between him and his wished-for home, is it not a gracious act to help him to pass over it? Foolish man! would you not help him to gain rest, who has long dwelt here in woe? "

Thus spoke Despair, and he said many beautiful and persuasive words concerning Death. And as the Red Cross Knight listened, all his courage and all his anger melted away, and it seemed to him that there would be no sweeter thing in the whole world than to lie down and be at rest.

"What is the good of living?" said Despair. "The longer you live the more sins you commit. All those great battles that you are so proud of winning, all this strife and bloodshed and revenge, which are praised now, hereafter you will be sorry for. Has not your evil life lasted long enough? He that hath once missed the right way, the farther he goes, the farther he goes wrong. Go no farther, then — stray no farther. Lie down here and take your rest. What has life to make men love it so? Fear, sickness, age, loss, labour, sorrow, strife, pain, hunger, cold, and fickle fortune, all these, and a thousand more ills make life to be hated rather than loved. Wretched man! you indeed have the greatest need of death if you will truly judge your own conduct. Never did knight who dared war-like deeds meet with more luckless adventures. Think of the deep dungeon wherein you were lately shut up; how often then did you wish for death! Though by good luck you escaped from there, yet death would prevent any further mischance into which you may happen to fall."

Then Despair went on to speak to the Red Cross Knight of all his sins. He pointed out the many wrong things he had done, and said that he had been so faithless and wicked that there was no hope for him of any mercy or forgiveness. Rather than live longer and add to his sins, it would be better for him to die at once, and put an end to all.

The Knight was greatly moved by this speech, which pierced his heart like a sword. Too well he knew that it was all true. There came to his conscience such a vivid memory of all his wrongdoings that all his strength melted away, as if a spell had

bewitched him. When Despair saw him waver and grow weak, and that his soul was deeply troubled, he tried all the harder to drive him to utter misery.

"Think of all your sins," he said. "God is very angry with you. You are not worthy to live. It is only just that you should die. Better kill yourself at once."

Then Despair went and fetched a dagger, sharp and keen, and gave it to the Red Cross Knight. Trembling like an aspen-leaf, the Knight took it, and lifted up his hand to slay himself.

When Una saw this, she grew cold with horror, but, starting forward, she snatched the knife from his hand, and threw it to the ground, greatly enraged.

"Fie, fie, faint-hearted Knight!" she cried. "What is the meaning of this shameful strife? Is this the battle which you boasted you would fight with the horrible fiery Dragon? Come, come away, feeble and faithless man! Let no vain words deceive your manly heart, nor wicked thoughts dismay your brave spirit. Have you not a share in heavenly mercy? Why should you then despair who have been chosen to fight the good fight? If there is Justice, there is also Forgiveness, which soothes the anguish of remorse and blots out the record of sin. Arise, Sir Knight, arise and leave this evil place."

So up he rose, and straightway left the cave. When Despair saw this, and that his guest would safely depart in spite of all his beguiling words, he took a rope and tried to hang himself. But though he had tried to kill himself a thousand times, he could never do so, until the last day comes when all evil things shall perish for ever.

How the Red Cross Knight Came to the House of Holiness

The bravest man who boasts of bodily strength may often find his moral courage fail in the hour of temptation. If he gain the victory, let him not ascribe it to his own skill, but rather to the grace of God.

From what had happened in the Cave of Despair, Una saw that her Knight had grown faint and feeble; his long imprisonment had wasted away all his strength, and he was still quite unfit to fight. Therefore she determined to bring him to a place where he might refresh himself, and recover from his late sad plight.

There was an ancient house not far away, renowned through all the world for its goodness and holy learning, so well was it guided and governed by a wise matron. Her only joy was to comfort those in trouble and to help the helpless poor. She was called Dame Celia — the "Heavenly Lady" — and she had three beautiful daughters, Fedelia (Faith), Speranza (Hope), and Charissa (Love).

Arrived at the House of Holiness, they found the door fast locked, for it was warily watched, night and day, for fear of many foes. But when they knocked, the porter straightway opened to them. He was an aged man, with grey hair and slow footsteps; his name was Humility. They passed in, stooping low, for the way he showed them was strait and narrow, even as all good things are hardest at the beginning. But when they had entered they saw a spacious court, very pleasant to walk in. Here they were met by a frank, honest-looking man, called Zeal, who gladly acted as their guide till they came to the hall.

The squire of the household received them, and made them welcome; his name was Reverence. He was very gentle, modest, and sincere, always treating every one with the greatest kindness

and courtesy, not from any pretended politeness, but because of his own good and sweet disposition.

He conducted them to the lady of the house, who was busied as usual in some good works. Directly Dame Celia saw Una, she knew who she was; her heart filled with joy, and she put her arms round her and kissed her.

"Oh, happy earth," she cried, "whereon your innocent feet still tread! What good fortune has brought you this way, or did you wander here unknowingly? It is strange to see a knight-errant in this place, or any other man, for there are few who choose the narrow path or seek the right."

Una replied that they had come to rest their weary limbs, and to see the lady herself, whose fame and praise had reached them.

Then Dame Celia entertained them with every courtesy she could think of, and nothing was lacking to show her generosity and wisdom. Whilst they were talking, two beautiful maidens came in; they were Faith and Hope, the daughters of the lady. Faith was arrayed all in lily-white, and her face, shone like the light of the sun; in one hand she held a book. Her younger sister, Hope, was clad all in blue and carried a silver anchor; her face was not as cheerful as Faith's, but it was very noble and steadfast.

Presently a servant, called Obedience, came and conducted the guests to their rooms, in order that they might rest awhile. Afterwards Una asked Faith if she would allow the Red Cross Knight to enter her schoolhouse, in order that he might share in her heavenly learning, and hear the divine wisdom of her words.

So the Knight went to school to learn of Faith, and many were the wondrous things she taught him. Now he saw in its true light all the error of his ways, and he began truly to repent of all his wrong-doings. The thought of them was so bitter, that he felt he was no longer worthy to live.

Then came Hope with sweet comfort, and bade him trust steadily and not lose heart. And Dame Celia, seeing how unhappy he was, sent to him a wonderful doctor, called Patience. Thanks to his skill and wisdom, and to the careful nursing of his attendant, Repentance, the Red Cross Knight presently recovered, and grew well and strong again.

After this Una took him one day to visit the third daughter, whose name was Love. She was so wonderfully beautiful and good that there were few on earth to compare with her. They found her in the midst of a group of happy children; she wore a yellow robe, and sat in an ivory chair, and at her side were two turtle-doves.

Una besought Love to let the Red Cross Knight learn of her whatever she could teach, and to this request Love gladly agreed. Then she began to instruct the Knight in all good things. She spoke to him of love and righteousness, and how to do well, and bade him shun all wrath and hatred, which are displeasing to God. And when she had well taught him this, she went on to show him the path to heaven.

The better to guide his weak and wandering steps, she called an ancient matron, named Mercy, well known for her gracious and tender ways. Into her careful charge Love gave the Knight, to lead in the right path, so that he should never fall in all his journeying through the wide world, but come to the end in safety.

Then Mercy, taking the Knight by the hand, led him away by a narrow path; it was scattered with bushy thorns and ragged briars, but these she always cleared away before him, so that nothing might hinder his ready passage. And whenever his footsteps were cumbered, or began to falter and stray, she held him fast, and bore him up, so that he never fell.

The City of the Great King

Soon after leaving the House of Holiness, the Red Cross Knight and his guide, Mercy, came to a hospital by the wayside. Some bedesmen lived here, who had vowed all their life to the service of the King of Heaven, and who spent their days in doing good. Their gates were always open to weary travellers, and one of the brothers sat waiting to call in all poor and needy passers-by. Each of the brothers had a separate duty to perform. The first had to entertain travellers; the second, to give food to the needy; the third, clothing to those who had none; the fourth, to relieve prisoners and to redeem captives; the fifth, to comfort the sick and the dying; the sixth, to take charge of those who were dead, and to deck them with dainty flowers; the seventh had to look after widows and orphans. Mercy was a great friend of theirs, and Love was the founder of their order.

They stayed at the hospital for some time, while the Knight was taught all kinds of good works. He was very quick at learning, and soon became so perfect that no cause of blame or rebuke could be found in him.

Leaving the hospital, he next came with his guide to a steep and high hill, on the top of which was a church, with a little hermitage close by. Here there dwelt an old man, called Contemplation. He spent all his days in prayer and meditation, never thinking of worldly business, but only of God and goodness. When he saw the travellers approaching, at first he felt vexed, for he thought they would distract his thoughts to earthly matters. But recognising Mercy, whom he loved and respected, he greeted them civilly, and asked why they had climbed that tedious height.

"For that same purpose which every living person should make his aim — the wish to go to Heaven," replied Mercy. "Does not the path lead straight from here to that most glorious place which shines with ever-living light? The keys were given

into your hands by Faith, who requires that you show the lovely city to this knight in accordance with his desire."

Then Contemplation took the Red Cross Knight, and, after the latter had fasted awhile and prayed, he led him to the highest part of the hill.

From there he showed him a little path, steep and long, which led to a goodly city. The walls and towers were built very high and strong, of pearl and precious stones, more beautiful than tongue can tell. It was called "The City of the Great King," and in it dwelt eternal peace and happiness.

As the Knight stood gazing, he could see the blessed angels descending to and fro, and walking in the streets of the city, as friend walks with friend. At this he much wondered, and he began to ask what was the stately building that lifted its lofty towers so near the starry sky, and what unknown nation dwelt there.

"Fair Knight," said his companion, "that is Jerusalem — the New Jerusalem, which God has built for those to dwell in that are His chosen people, cleansed from sinful guilt by Christ, who died for the sins of the whole world. Now they are saints together in that city."

"Until now," said the Knight, "I thought that the city of Queen Gloriana, whence I come, was the fairest that might ever be seen. But now I know otherwise, for that great city yonder far surpasses it."

"Most true," said the holy man. "Yet for an earthly place the kingdom of Queen Gloriana is the fairest that eye can be hold. And you, Sir Knight, have done good service by aiding a desolate and oppressed maiden. But when you have won a famous victory, and high amongst all knights have hung your shield, follow no more the pursuit of earthly conquest, for bloodshed and war bring sin and sorrow. Seek this path which I point out

to you, for it will in the end bring you to Heaven. Go peaceably on your pilgrimage to the City of the Great King. A blessed end is ordained for you. Amongst the saints you shall be a saint, the friend and patron of your own nation. Saint George you shall be called — "Saint George for merry England, the sign of Victory."

"O holy Sire!" said the Knight, "how can I requite you for all that you have done for me?"

His eyes were dazzled by the brightness of the glory at which he had been gazing, so that he could scarcely see the ground by which to return; so dark are earthly things compared with divine.

Thanking and rewarding the good man for all his trouble, the Red Cross Knight returned to Una, who was anxiously awaiting him. She received him with joy, and after he had rested a little, she bade him be mindful of the task still before him. So they took leave of Dame Celia and her three daughters, and once more set out on their journey.

The Last Fight

At last Una and the Knight came to Una's kingdom, where her parents were held captive, and all the land lay wasted by the terrible dragon. As they drew near their journey's end, Una began to cheer her companion with brave words.

"Dear Knight," she said, "who for my sake have suffered all these sorrows, may Heaven reward you for your weary toil! Now we have come to my own country, and the place where all our perils dwell. This is the haunt of the horrible monster, therefore be well on your guard and ready for the foe. Call up all your courage, and do better than you have ever done before, so that hereafter you shall be renowned above all knights on earth."

At this moment they heard a hideous roaring sound, which filled the air, and almost shook the solid ground. Soon they saw

the dreadful dragon where he lay stretched on the sunny side of a great hill. Directly he caught sight of the glittering armour of the Knight, he quickly roused himself, and hastened towards them.

The Red Cross Knight bade Una go to a hill at some distance, from where she might behold the battle and be safe from danger. She had scarcely done so when the huge beast drew near, half flying, and half running in his haste.

He was a dreadful creature to look at, very big, covered with brazen scales like a coat of steel, which he clashed loudly as he came. He had two immense wings with which he could fly, and at the point of his great, knotted tail were two stings, sharper than the sharpest steel. Worse even than these, however, were his cruel claws, which tore to pieces everything that came within their clutches. He had three rows of iron teeth, and his eyes, blazing with wrath, sparkled like living fire.

Such was the terrible monster with whom the Red Cross Knight had now to do battle.

All day they fought; and when evening came, the Knight was quite worn out and almost defeated. As it chanced, however, close by was a spring, the waters of which possessed a wonderful gift of healing. The Knight was driven backwards and fell into this well.

The dragon clapped his wings in triumph, for he thought he had gained the victory. But so great was the power of the water in this well that although the Knight's own strength was utterly exhausted, yet he rose out of it refreshed and vigorous. The dawn of the next day found him stronger than ever, and ready for battle.

The name of the spring was called the Well of Life.

All through the second day the battle lasted, and again, when evening came, the Knight was almost defeated. But this night he

rested under a beautiful tree laden with goodly fruit; the name of the tree was the Tree of Life. From it flowed, as from a well, a trickling stream of balm, a perfect cure for all ills, and whoever ate of its fruit attained to everlasting life.

The strength of the Red Cross Knight alone would never have been sufficient to overcome the terrible Dragon of Sin, but the water of the Well of Life, and the balm from the Tree of Life, gave him a power that nothing could resist.

On the morning of the third day he slew the dragon.

"Ease after War"

The sun had scarcely risen on the third day, when the watchman on the walls of the brazen tower saw the death of the dragon. He hastily called to the captive King and Queen, who, coming forth, ordered the tidings of peace and joy to be proclaimed through the whole land.

Then all the trumpets sounded for victory, and the people came flocking as to a great feast, rejoicing at the fall of the cruel enemy, from whose bondage they were now free.

Forth from the castle came the King and Queen, attended by a noble company. In front marched a goodly band of brave young men, all able to wield arms, but who now bore laurel branches in sign of victory and peace. These they threw at the feet of the Red Cross Knight, and hailed him conqueror.

Then came beautiful maidens with garlands of flowers and timbrels; troops of merry children ran in front, dancing and singing to the sound of sweet music. When they reached the spot where Una stood, they bowed before her, and crowned her with a garland, so that she looked — as indeed she was — a queen.

The King gave goodly gifts of gold and ivory to his brave champion, and thanked him a thousand times for all that he had done. Then the Red Cross Knight and Una were brought in triumph to the palace; the trumpets and the clarions sounded, and all the people sang for joy, and strewed their garments in the way. At the palace everything was splendid and beautiful, as befitted a prince's court, and here a great feast was held.

The King and Queen made their guest tell them all the strange adventures and perils that had befallen him. They listened with much interest and pity to his story. Then said the King,

"Dear son, great are the evils which you have borne, so that I know not whether most to praise or to pity you. Never has living man passed through a sea of more deadly dangers. But since you have arrived safely at the shore, now let us think of ease and everlasting rest."

" Ah! dearest sovereign," replied the brave Knight, "I may not yet think of ease or rest. For by the vow which I made when I first took up arms, I plighted myself to return to Queen Gloriana, and to serve her in warlike ways for six years."

The King, when he heard this, was very sorry, but he knew that the vow must be kept.

"As soon as the six years are over," said he, "you shall return here and marry my daughter, the Lady Una. I proclaimed through the world that whoever killed the dragon should have my only daughter to be his wife, and should be made heir of my kingdom. Since you have won the reward by noble chivalry, lo! here I yield to you my daughter and my kingdom."

Then Una stepped forward, radiant as the morning star and fair as the flowers in May. She wore a garment of lily-white, that looked as if it were woven of silk and silver. The blazing brightness of her beauty and the glorious light of her sunshiny

face can scarcely be told. Even her dear Knight, who had been with her every day, wondered at the sight.

So the Red Cross Knight and Una were betrothed. Every one, young and old, rejoiced, and a solemn feast was held through all the land. Now, indeed, the Knight thought himself happy. Whenever his eye beheld Una, his heart melted with joy; no wickedness nor envy could ever again harm their love.

Yet even in the midst of his happiness he remembered the vow he had made to return to Queen Gloriana. His work was not yet done, and at last the day came when he had to leave Una, and set forth again on his travels.

We know, however, that whatever new perils lay before him, he would be able to overcome them all by the help of his heavenly armour, and that in the end he would be restored to Una, to dwell happily with her for ever.

The Vision of Dante

(*The Divine Comedy*)

I want to tell a beautiful story to you, dear children. It has been told over and over again for six hundred years, yet people keep reading it, and re-reading it, and wise men never tire of studying it. Many great artists have painted pictures, and sculptors have made statues, and musicians have composed operas, and clergymen have written sermons from thoughts inspired by it. A great poet first gave it to the world in the form of a grand poem which some day you may read, but I will try to tell it to you today as a short story. I am afraid that you would go to sleep if I should undertake to read the poem to you. You do not yet know enough about life to understand it.

Once upon a time, very long ago, there was a man whose name was Dante. He had done wrong and had wandered a long way from his home. He does not tell us how, or why. He begins by saying that he had gone to sleep in a great forest. Suddenly he awoke, and tried to find his way out of it, first by one path, and then another; but all in vain.

Through an opening where the tall trees had not grown quite so thick, he saw in the distance a great mountain, on the top of which the sun was shining brightly. "Ah!" thought he to himself, "if I can but reach the top of that mountain I am sure I can see a long way in every direction. No woods can grow tall enough to keep me from finding my path then!" So with new courage he started toward the mountain, but he had not walked far when a beautiful spotted panther stood with glaring eyes in his pathway. He trembled, for he knew that going forward meant that he would be destroyed. He turned hastily aside into another path, but he had gone only a short distance in this direction before he saw a huge lion coming toward him. In greater haste

than before he turned into still another path. His heart was beating very fast now, and he hastened along without taking much notice of what lay before him. Suddenly he came upon a lean and hungry wolf, which looked as if he could devour half a dozen men. Dante turned and fled back into the dark woods, " where the sun was silent." He thought, "What is the use of trying to get out of this terrible forest? There are wild beasts on every side. If I escape one I am sure to be devoured by another; I might as well give up trying." He had now lost all hope.

Just at this moment he saw a man coming towards him. The face of the man was beaming with smiles as if he had some good news to tell. Dante ran forward to meet him, crying, "Have mercy on me, whoever you are! See that beast from which I have fled! My body is trembling yet with fright!"

The strange man, whose name was Virgil, told Dante that he had come to help him, but that they would have to go by another path to get out of this savage wilderness. He then explained that they must go down through a deep, bad-smelling and dark hole in the ground, and must meet with many disagreeable things and crawl through much dirt and filth; but after they had gone through this close, dirty tunnel, they would again see the light, and if they had strength enough to climb, they might in the end get to a delightful spot on the top of the mountain called the Terrestrial Paradise, from which lovely place Dante could go home if he wanted to.

At first Dante was afraid to go with Virgil, although he had often read the wise and noble books which the latter had written. But when he heard that Beatrice, whom he had loved as he loved no one else on earth, had come from Heaven in the form of a bright Angel to urge Virgil to come to him, his heart was so filled with joy that he at once renewed his courage, and told Virgil to go forward, promising that he would trust him as a guide.

They then began their perilous journey. The dark pit through which they were to pass was the shape of an immense funnel or a cone turned upside down. It was so large that it reached from the surface down to the very center of the earth. Indeed, though it was as twilight where they entered, and was quite wide and airy, yet as they slowly traveled down its rocky sides the place grew darker and narrower and the air more stifling, and the smell was worse than anything of which you have ever dreamed. At times Dante nearly fainted, but Virgil put his arms around him and held him up until he revived. I will not stop to tell you of all the horrible experiences they went through. By and by when you grow to be men and women, you can read the whole poem for yourselves.

At last they reached the bottom of the foul pit; it was the very center of the earth, and was the darkest spot possible. Then they began to climb through the narrow opening which they saw. They wanted to get to the surface on the other side of the world, and again see the light of the sun.

Dante felt as if he were escaping from a terrible plague-stricken prison-house. The first things he looked at were four beautiful stars shining far above his head; then he knew he was where he could get fresh air and light, for he felt sure that where stars were to be seen air and light could be found. He soon discovered that he was on a large island, in the middle of which stood a great mountain. This, Virgil told Dante, was the mountain which they would have to climb.

It was Easter morning!

As they were looking about them, not knowing exactly which way to turn, they saw an old man with a long white beard. His face was so radiant that it reminded Dante of the stars at which he had been gazing. The old man told them where to go to begin the ascent of the mountain. But he said that Virgil must first get the grime and dirt off of Dante. You know we cannot

very well get into dirty places without having some of the cinders and ashes and other filth stick to us. He also kindly told them where they could find some easily bent rushes which they could use to gird up Dante's long cloak, so that he might climb the better.

I think it must have been the old man's kindness to the many strangers who came to the island that caused his face to look so beaming as to remind Dante of the stars. Poor Dante thought over all his past life, how he had wandered away from his home, how he had found himself in the gloomy woods, how he had met the fierce beasts, and last of all he thought of the blackening dirt he had gotten on himself in coming through the deep hole. Then he thought of his rescue from all these evils and the tears rolled down his cheeks. Virgil spread his hands out upon the grass, still wet with the dew from heaven, and with the moisture thus gained, he washed Dante's face. The tears Dante was shedding helped to wash away the dirt.

After this they went to where the rushes were growing and gathered some for a belt for Dante. Strange as it may sound to you, dear children, as fast as they gathered one rush, another sprang up in its place. They bound these enchanted rushes around Dante's waist, and he was now ready for the upward climb and was quite eager to begin.

They turned and looked once more at the ocean. Dante's eyes were just beginning to get used to the sunlight. Suddenly he saw a strange white light coming along the sea towards them. He was astonished. As it came nearer and nearer the light grew more and more dazzling, and Dante saw that it was a glorious and radiant angel! He fell upon his knees and dropped his gaze to the ground, for the face of the angel was so bright that he could not look upon it. The strange and beautiful being came swiftly forward, bringing with him a small boat full of people. The very water became resplendent with light as the boat moved

swiftly through it, yet the angel had neither oar nor sail. His shining wings, spread high above his head, seemed to waft the boat along by some invisible power. He landed the people, and quick as a sunbeam was gone.

The newly arrived souls came up to Dante and Virgil and inquired the way, for they too were going up the steep, rough mountain, around which wound a difficult path. The end of the path no one could see. They walked along together for a short distance, and while Virgil was searching the ground for the right path, Dante lifted his eyes upward and saw some people looking over a rocky wall that bordered the road on the next bend above them. To these fellow-travelers he called for help, as he felt sure they must have found the right path up the mountain's side. They gladly pointed out the spot where Virgil and Dante could find the way, and soon they were upon it. But now arose a serious difficulty. From the growing twilight they knew that night was coming on, and in this strange, new country nobody dared travel in the dark. There were too many pitfalls and stumbling blocks to make it safe to travel without the light of the sun. Virgil knew that the wisest and best thing to do in hours of darkness was to keep still and wait for more light. A man whom they had met on the road pointed out a safe, little valley where they could stay until the sunlight came once more.

Ah, how I wish you could have seen that valley!

It was called the Valley of the Princes. As they approached it a vision burst upon them of the loveliest spot that could be imagined. If gold and silver and scarlet and green and blue and all the finest colors in the world were put together into a flower garden they would not make anything half so beautiful as was this Valley of the Princes. Not only were the colors so fine, but the perfumes were the sweetest ever breathed. They went quietly and slowly into the valley and sat down. The air about

them grew darker and darker as the sun set behind the mountains.

All at once Dante heard some voices singing a gentle hymn. I think it must have been a hymn something like our own little hymn, "Wearily at Daylight's Close," for it made Dante think of the Heavenly Father, and look up into the sky, whose only brightness was the stars shining far above his head. As he looked he saw sweep down out of the high heavens two glad angels of God, robed in pale, shining green. Each was surrounded with a radiance so bright that it was dazzling; both carried swords of fire. Lightning never came from the sky more swiftly than did these two angels. They separated as they approached the earth; one placed himself upon the mountain on one side of the valley and the other upon the mountain on the other side. Dante wondered what all this meant, but the man who had told them where to find the valley was still with them. He explained that the angels had come to protect all travelers who were staying in the dark valley until light should come again and they could see to go forward.

Just then Dante turned and saw a large, ugly snake winding its way silently through the grass. Quick as a flash of lightning one of the angels descended from his high post, and, with a touch of his flaming sword, turned the snake, which fled in dismay. Then Dante knew that the angels had indeed been sent from heaven, and in his heart he felt very glad that all through this dark night he might be sure of their protecting love. So he quietly laid himself down upon the grass, and went to sleep. While sleeping he had a strange dream; an eagle of fire seemed to be bearing him up through the air.

He awoke. It was morning; the sun was shining and the birds were singing. Flowers were blooming all around him and yet it was not the same place in which he had gone to sleep. He saw on looking about him that he was farther up the mountain side.

He turned with a question to Virgil, who soon told him that while he had slept in the Valley of the Princes another angel, named Lucia, had been sent from Heaven to bear him in her arms over the rough places where he could not have traveled unaided, and that he now stood at the real entrance of the path up the mountain.

"We must pass through that gate which you see in front of you," said Virgil, "and before you enter it I must tell you that there will be some very hard climbing for you, and sometimes you will grow weary and discouraged, but be assured that it will become less painful as you climb. The hardest part is the first part. It grows easier and easier as you near the top, until when you reach the Terrestrial Paradise, there will be no longer any climbing at all. There you shall see your beloved Beatrice and she will reveal to you a vision of GOD."

With this they started towards the gate. Now I must tell you about this gate, children, because it was a very peculiar gate, and some of these days you may have to go through it yourselves. As they came near, Dante saw that it had three broad steps leading up to it. The bottom step was like polished marble, and so shining that you could see your face reflected in it. Each traveler who approached it saw just how unclean he was, or how tired, or how cross looking. The next step was a dark purplish black step. It was cracked lengthwise and crosswise, and had a sad look about it as if it were sorry for the reflections which it saw in the bottom step. The third step at the top was red, so red that it reminded Dante of blood. Above this towered the great gateway. Upon the sill of this gate sat another wonderful angel in shining garments which were brighter than the moon. His feet rested upon the top step.

As Dante and Virgil approached, the angel asked them what they wanted. They told him that they wished to go through the gate in order that they might climb the mountain. The angel

leaned forward, and with the edge of the sword which he held in his hand he printed on Dante's forehead seven letters. Dante knew that the seven letters stood for the seven things that were wrong inside of his heart. Then the angel took from his side a silver key and a golden key, and unlocking the gate with each, he let it swing wide upon its hinges, and our two travelers passed through.

They had no sooner entered than they heard a man singing praises to God. As they traveled along the path which wound upward, they saw upon the rocks at their sides wonderfully carved pictures of people who had been good and kind and always thoughtful of others instead of themselves. As Dante looked at them they seemed to him to be the most marvelous pictures he had ever seen. He thought within his heart, "How beautiful!" "How beautiful!" "How I wish I could be like these people!" Then he turned and looked down upon the rocks on which he was treading, he saw there were more carvings upon the stones below; but these were of people who thought of nobody but themselves haughty people, selfish people, and idle ones.

As Dante gazed upon them, he bowed himself lower and lower, for he thought within his heart, "I fear I am more like these people than I am like the others." He had been a proud and haughty man in the past, and now he knew how ugly and selfish that haughtiness was. As he ascended the road, he must have prayed to God to make him more like the beautiful and gentle people whose portraits he had seen upon the rocks at his side. He had been walking, bent very low; all at once he straightened himself up; he felt as if some great weight had been lifted off his shoulders. He turned to Virgil, saying, "Master, from what heavy thing have I been lightened?" Virgil glanced up at his forehead. Dante stretched forth the fingers of his hand and felt the letters which the angel had placed upon his forehead. There

were but six. There had been seven. Virgil smiled, and the two passed on.

Their ears caught the sound of voices singing in sweet tones, "Blessed are the poor in spirit!" "Blessed are the poor in spirit!" Then Dante knew that the other souls, too, had prayed to God to take pride and haughtiness and selfishness out of their lives.

They passed along to the higher terrace on the mountain side, and here they saw no pictures, but heard strange, sweet voices singing through the air. These voices were singing of the people who had been glad when others were made happy, who had loved and praised the good in those about them, who had rejoiced when some one else besides themselves had been commended. The voices seemed so joyful as they told of these loving hearts, that Dante shut his eyes and listened. Soon he heard other voices tell of the people who had liked to talk of themselves and not of others, who did not care to hear anybody else praised, people whom it made unhappy to know that anybody else was happy. "Ah!" thought he to himself, "I fear, I fear that I have been like these last people of whom the voices tell such sad, unhappy things. How I long with all my heart to be freed from this hateful thing called Envy!"

Then he prayed to God to help him to rejoice over the happiness of others, to be willing to help others, and to realize that others were helping him; and as he thought these thoughts and prayed this prayer, another burden seemed lifted from off him, and he put his hand to his forehead and found that another of the terrible letters was gone. He had but five remaining on his forehead now, and already the climbing seemed easier.

They soon came to another very difficult passage in the road, and so rough and sharp were the rocks which stood in the pathway that Dante's heart failed him, and he must have stopped in his onward journey up the mountain had not another loving angel of God come from some unseen point, and, lifting him

with strong arms, carried him over the hard place, setting him again upon his feet. I think Dante must have thanked God for thus sending him help in his moment of discouragement; at any rate he felt that he had been slothful and not eager enough to reach the top of the mountain.

On and on he traveled, sometimes with voices in the air singing to encourage him, sometimes with warnings coming from unknown quarters. The very trees laden with fruit on the roadside seemed to say, " Take enough of us, but do not eat too much; a glutton cannot see GOD."

As they mounted higher and higher the landscape grew broader and broader, and more filled with a strange, new sunshine. The huge boulders and angry-looking rocks below, which had so frightened Dante as he began his journey, seemed now scarcely larger than pebbles and little stones. He smiled to think that he had never cared for them at all. Weariness was now gone, the last of the mysterious letters had vanished from his forehead, and the one longing of Dante's heart was to meet again his beautiful and beloved Beatrice, and be led by her into the presence of the Great GOD of the Universe, who had so wonderfully and so mysteriously sent His angels to help him on the way.

At last they reached the spot called the Terrestrial Paradise, and there, as Virgil had told him, stood his loving Beatrice, who took him by the hand and led him up into Heaven itself, beyond the clouds, beyond the stars, beyond planets and worlds, even to the foot of the Throne of GOD!

Of this I cannot tell you. No words of mine could make you see that glorious vision as Dante then beheld it. Your own little hearts must be freed from all wrong thoughts, from all evil motives, from all selfish desires, must be filled with a love of others, and with generous willingness to do for others, and then

may come to you, too, some day, this Great Vision that came to Dante.

And you will then learn that God is with you all the time, but only the pure in heart can see Him.

As You Like It

(Shakespeare)

Chapter 1

A long time ago there lived in France two fair maidens named Rosalind and Celia. They loved each other so well they were inseparable as two cherries on one stalk, and whether waking or sleeping, never were happy out of each other's company.

Rosalind and Celia were cousins, for their fathers were brothers. The father of Rosalind was the rightful lord over a great province in France, but his brother Frederick, Celia's father, had wrongfully seized the dukedom and banished his elder brother into a far country. He had, however, kept the little Rosalind to be a playmate for his only child Celia. All this had happened when the two were little children, but Rosalind could well remember her kind, good father, and the thought of his hard fate often made her very sad. Her mother, like Celia's, had died when she was too young to know of the loss.

Celia, who would have done anything to spare Rosalind's sorrow, always tried to comfort her, bidding her look upon her uncle Frederick as though he were father to them both, since they were in truth like sisters. She promised, too, that the kingdom should be Rosalind's at Duke Frederick's death.

"What he hath taken away perforce I will render thee again in affection, by mine honour, I will," said Celia. "Therefore, my sweet Rose, my dear Rose, be merry."

But it was not the kingdom that Rosalind wanted, nor another father, but her own banished and wronged, whom she could never forget. Still, to please Celia, she often tried to laugh and be happy when she felt in truth more like weeping.

One day, Duke Frederick had a wrestling match at the palace, and Celia and Rosalind were invited to attend. The champion wrestler was one Charles, whom as yet no one had been able to overthrow. He was a big, powerful Goliath, and one after another stood up before him, only to be knocked down like ninepins, lucky if they escaped with merely broken bones and lived to fight another day.

Just as the two young Princesses came on the scene, a tall, fair youth advanced dauntlessly, and challenged the terrible Charles as though it were a mere pastime he undertook.

The Duke called him aside, feeling a sudden liking for the young man on account of his gallant bearing:

"Be warned," he said, "how you match your youth and inexperience against so redoubtable a champion. Take example by those who have gone before you and retire while there is yet time."

"Nay, I beseech you, my liege — rather than go back where I have ventured forth I would lose my life ten times over," replied the young man.

This speech but increased the Duke's desire to save the too daring youth. He appealed to his daughter and niece, bidding them see if they could not deter him with their soft entreaties.

Rosalind and Celia were already following with keen interest the preparations for the fight.

"Alas! he is indeed too young," cried Celia; "yet he looks so sure of success," she added as the youth threw back his head proudly, and faced the grim Charles with an indifferent glance. Rosalind's eyes were fixed on him, too, but she said nothing.

"Call him hither, good Monsieur Le Beau," said Celia to one of the attendant courtiers, who hastened to obey the young Princess, and presently the youth stood bowing before them.

"We pray you for your own sake do not undertake this unequal combat," said Celia earnestly. "You have seen cruel proof of this man's strength; we beg you give up the attempt." It was true he had seen three men already mortally wounded before the Princesses arrived. But Rosalind, noting how the young man's cheek flushed with wounded pride, knew he cared more for his honour than for life.

"If you will retire, young sir," she said, "we undertake that your noble reputation shall in no way suffer, for it is we who will beg the Duke that for our sakes the wrestling be stopped now."

Rosalind's soft brown eyes were filled with such tender concern and her voice held such gentle entreaty, that the young man fell in love with her then and there. He was in an awkward fix, however, for though to deny her request was hard, yet to show himself a coward in her eyes was far harder. So he answered:

"I beseech you, fair and gracious ladies, do not punish me by thinking hard thoughts of me for denying your request, but on the contrary, let your gentle wishes and your kind glances go with me to this trial. After all if I fail and am killed, it will not matter, for I am willing enough to die, having nothing to live for. I shall do my friends no injury, for I have none to lament me, and my place will soon be filled by a better man."

It seemed sad indeed to think of one so young and brave in so lonely a condition, and the hearts of both maidens were filled with sympathy.

"How I wish I could help you to win!" sighed Rosalind.

"And I, too," added Celia.

"Come," shouted the big champion," where is this young gallant who is so desirous of sleeping in Mother Earth? "

"Ready," cried Orlando, for that was the youth's name.

"Hercules go with you," said Rosalind, but she knew, as Orlando bowed before her, that he would rather have her sympathy go with him than the strength and protection of all the Olympians. And knowing that he had this sympathy, Orlando felt the strength of the strong god race through his limbs, and fought as he had never fought before. The Duke, who had begun by fearing for the young man, soon found his fears turning to amazement, as he perceived the redoubtable champion having much ado to hold his own. Rosalind and Celia watched, breathless with anxiety. Suddenly there was a loud shout from the spectators — Charles, the wrestler, was overthrown.

"No more, no more!" cried the Duke, wishing the fight to end there. But Orlando besought him they might continue, saying he was not even out of breath.

"And Charles, how art thou." inquired the Duke. But from the prostrate figure on the ground came no reply.

"He cannot speak," said Le Beau. And the champion was carried off unconscious. The fight was ended.

The Duke turned graciously to the young victor and inquired his name. But his smile was suddenly overclouded on hearing him reply he was Orlando, the youngest son of Sir Roland de Boys, a knight who had been a staunch follower and friend of the banished Duke.

"Fare thee well," he said, rising abruptly with a troubled frown. " Thou art a gallant youth, but I would thou hadst told me of another father." So saying he left the ground, followed by his retinue.

"I am more proud to be Sir Roland's son than were I Duke Frederick's heir," said the young man, as he stood gazing after the offended Duke.

Rosalind and Celia had listened with deep interest to the conversation that passed.

"Let us go thank him and encourage him," said Celia. "My father's harshness sticks me at heart."

Rosalind was only too anxious to do so, for her father, she knew, had loved Sir Roland as his own soul. While Celia spoke kind words of gracious praise, she took the chain from her neck, and presenting it to Orlando, begged him to wear it for her sake.

"I, like yourself, am unfortunate, or I would give more," said she. Then, feeling shy at having said so much to one who was a stranger, she turned to go. Celia, too, bade him farewell.

"May I not even thank you?" cried Orlando, in despair at seeing them depart.

Rosalind turned back again. After all, she felt that to one who was the son of her father's dearest friend she ought to be very nice and kind. So she told him again how well he had wrestled, and added that he had overthrown more than his enemies. Then she said, "Fare you well," and hurried away.

Orlando gazed after her and sighed, and then began kissing fervently the chain she had hung round his neck. His pleasant thoughts were soon interrupted, however, by Le Beau, who came up and warned him in friendly fashion that if he valued his life he had best be gone without delay, since the Duke Frederick was much incensed against him.

It was with great sorrow that Orlando departed. for now he thought never would he see again the fair face of Rosalind.

Meanwhile, Duke Frederick's ill-humor and suspicion once roused, he could not rest content with one victim. For some time past he had felt a growing irritation against Rosalind. When people praised her beauty and sweetness, it reminded him unpleasantly that she was her father's daughter — that father he had wronged and who still lived, a lurking danger to himself. Being a man of impetuous and moody nature, he suddenly determined to banish Rosalind without further delay. He found

the two cousins as usual together. They had been talking of Orlando, and Rosalind had confided to her cousin that she had lost her heart to the gallant youth. To the gentle Celia it appeared passing strange that Rosalind could fall in love so quickly. Rosalind did not quite know how to explain it herself, so she gave as a reason that her father had loved Orlando's father. But Celia replied that if they were to follow in their fathers' steps, she ought then to hate Orlando, since Duke Frederick, her father, had hated Sir Roland de Boys. Yet, far from hating, Celia owned to quite a kindly feeling for the young man.

"Let me love him for that, then," laughed Rosalind.

A day was not far off when Celia, too, would learn what was this passing strange experience; but as yet she was unversed in any love save that tender affection she had for Rosalind. The maidens' pleasant talk was suddenly interrupted by the Duke, who approached them, his eyes full of anger.

"Mistress Rosalind," he cried, "despatch you with your fastest haste, and get you from our Court."

Rosalind heard him with bewilderment:

"Me, uncle?" she asked.

"Ay — you, niece," he answered angrily. "If within ten days thou art found so near our Court as twenty miles, thou diest for it."

Both Rosalind and Celia listened to this stern decree in blank amazement and despair.

Rosalind, strong in her innocence of having, either by deed or thought, done anything to displease her uncle, with gentle dignity begged to know the reason for this order. "Never," she assured him, "even in thought, did I offend your highness."

The Duke, conscious of his injustice, took refuge in a loud voice and bullying manner.

"Thus do all traitors speak.... They are as innocent as grace itself.... Let it suffice thee, I trust thee not."

"Yet your mistrust cannot make me a traitor," answered Rosalind boldly. It was just as her father himself might have replied, and added fuel to the fire of her uncle's wrath.

"Thou art thy father's daughter!" he cried. "There's enough."

"So was I when your highness took his kingdom and banished him. My father was no traitor, even were treason inherited, which it is not," Rosalind told him proudly.

Celia listened to them in fear and anxiety; but she was no coward, though so gentle.

"Dear Sovereign, hear me speak." She laid her hand gently on her father's arm. Instantly his voice and look softened as he turned to his beloved daughter.

"Ay, Celia," he said, "it was but for your sake we kept her; else she had gone with her father."

"I did not then entreat to have her stay. It was your pleasure and your own remorse," said Celia. "I was too young to know how to value her, but now," she pleaded, "I know her and love her so that I cannot live without her."

"She is too clever for thee," said the Duke. "Thou art a fool. She robs thee of thy name and steals the affection of thy people from thee by her smooth words and her silent patience. When she is gone it will be better every way for thee. Firm and irrevocable is my doom which I have passed on her. She is banished."

Then the gentle Celia rose to the occasion and showed of what a strong, loyal soul she was possessed.

"Pronounce that sentence, then, on me, my liege," she said. "I cannot live out of her company."

The Duke waved her aside scornfully.

"You are a fool." Then to Rosalind: "You, niece, prepare yourself. If you outstay the time, upon mine honour and in the greatness of my word, you die!" So saying, he turned majestically and left them.

Both Rosalind and Celia knew now that there was no hope of turning the hard Duke from his purpose. They determined, therefore, to escape together to the Forest of Arden in search of Rosalind's father. They knew that their departure would soon be discovered, and search be made for the Princess Celia, who was heir to her father's crown. They decided, therefore, to wear a disguise in order to mislead their pursuers and avert the dangers which might confront two young Princesses travelling alone and unprotected. Rosalind, being the taller, attired herself as a young man of low estate, while Celia, in poor mean raiment, went as his sister, both besmirching their fair faces with brown stain till they were the colour of gipsies. Their names, too, they changed, Rosalind adopting the name of Ganymede, and Celia that of Aliena.

They determined to take with them but one attendant, and that no other than the Court Fool, Master Touchstone. Some people may think this a strange choice, and that two young Princesses starting alone on an unknown journey would rather have had an able-bodied swordsman; or, bethinking them of the difficulty of obtaining food, that they would have engaged the services of a cook, or perhaps a lady's maid, since never in their lives had they dressed without the assistance of one. But think how wise, after all, were these young maids. Though so little experienced, they realized that such hardships as were likely to befall them would count for little were they only kept thoroughly amused in cheerful company, and this they knew they would be with the Fool — who was no fool. Under the cover of his cap and bells and motley coat he had always enjoyed a perfect liberty of speech permitted to no one else in the Palace. From him you got no empty compliments and soft phrases, and

the relief of this to ladies brought up in Court circles cannot be imagined, for too much sugar is a far worse evil than none.

So soon as all slept and quiet reigned in the Palace, these three stole out noiselessly into the night and made their escape by an unfrequented path through the gardens, Rosalind and Celia taking with them money and jewels carefully concealed under their homely cloaks.

Thanks to their disguise, all went well, and though next morning the Duke, in a fine tantrum, sent out to search the country high and low for his missing daughter, none thought of looking for her in such humble company as that of two footsore pedlars in dusty, patched garments, her own no better.

Their journey, which perforce was made on foot, was long and tedious, and when at last they succeeded in reaching the great Forest of Arden all three were ready to drop with fatigue. Far as the eye could see was no sign of any human habitation. Celia declared she could go no farther, and sat down under the great towering trees.

Rosalind called to a passing shepherd and inquired whether in this great desert love or money could buy a bed and food, for, said she, pointing to Celia, this young maid is faint and weary.

The shepherd, a kind-hearted fellow, replied that there was no place for miles around, save a small cottage near by, and that was for sale, together with the sheep and pasture which went with it. He feared, however, they would find but simple fare, and little of that, though to what there was he bade them welcome, since he had charge of the sale. Gladly they followed him to this haven of rest, and finding they liked the place, Rosalind and Celia bought the little cottage, the pasture, and the flocks, and engaged the honest shepherd to remain in their service. That night they slept soundly and happily beneath their own humble roof, more pleased than if they were lodged in any palace.

Chapter 2

The ladies Rosalind and Celia thoroughly enjoyed their life as shepherd and shepherdess in the forest. Never had they felt so happy and free. No tiresome Court ceremonies, no rules and etiquette. They kept just the hours they liked and had their simple meals under the greenwood trees. It was a perpetual picnic, and for company what better could they have than each other and the funny Touchstone, who was so clever and amusing that he could make you laugh even when lost in a desert, footsore and starving.

They had not yet found Rosalind's father. The forest was not only vast but very densely wooded, which, no doubt, partly accounts for this fact, for he was in truth not far from the very cottage in which they dwelt. Sometimes in the distance they heard the sound of the huntsmen's horns, but little did they dream these hunters were no other than Duke Ferdinand and his followers.

One day, wandering in the forest, Rosalind saw, to her surprise, her own name carved in large letters on the bark of a tree. Going on a little farther, she saw another tree decorated in the same manner, and hanging from one of the branches a letter addressed to "Rosalind." She plucked this strange fruit, and her heart beat quickly. Who could have carved her name on the trees? Was it her father the Duke? Perhaps the letter would explain. But the letter was in verse and did not seem to be the kind of thing a father, who was not a poet, would write, specially one who had not seen his daughter since she was a child. It puzzled Rosalind so much she read it aloud. This was the poem:

"From the East to Western Ind,
No jewel is like Rosalind.
Her worth, being mounted on the wind,
Through all the world bears Rosalind.

All the pictures fairest limned
Are but black to Rosalind.
Let no face be kept in mind
But the fair of Rosalind."

As she read aloud and pondered on these words, Rosalind did not notice that Touchstone had approached and was listening. As she concluded he burst out laughing, and made fun of the poem, saying he could rhyme better than that by the yard himself.

Rosalind liked the verses — how could she help it? — and for once felt very annoyed with the Fool. But he laughed the more, and began to mimic the unknown poet:

"Sweetest nut hath sourest rind.
Such a nut is Rosalind.
He that sweetest rose will find
Must find love's prick and Rosalind."

This vexed Rosalind, but Touchstone went on teasing her, and when she said she had found the verses on a tree, he replied, "Truly the tree yields bad fruit."

They were interrupted by Celia, who came upon them also reading verses she had found on another tree. It was like the first poem, all about Rosalind. Celia sent away Touchstone, and then inquired of Rosalind whether she was not surprised to find her name carved upon the trees and verses hanging from the boughs.

Rosalind replied she had been overcome with wonder even before Celia appeared.

"Can you guess who has done this?" said Celia, her eyes twinkling as though she knew a secret.

"Is it a man? " asked Rosalind.

"With a chain, that you once wore, about his neck," added Celia, with a laugh.

"Who is it? I beg you say," entreated Rosalind.

"Oh lord! It is a hard matter for friends to meet." Celia gave a mock sigh. "Easier far for mountains — they can be removed by earthquakes and so encounter"

"Nay, but who is it?" repeated Rosalind.

"Oh it is wonderful, wonderful, most wonderful," went on Celia mockingly.

"Is his head worth a hat or his chin worth a beard?" demanded Rosalind.

"Nay, he hath but little beard," said Celia. "It is young Orlando, that tripped up the wrestler's heels and your heart both in the same instant," she added, laughing outright.

Rosalind doubted that she was still making fun of her, and to her this was no laughing matter, but very sober earnest.

"The devil take mocking," she answered impatiently; "speak the truth."

"In faith, cousin, 'tis he," replied Celia, this time seriously. But Rosalind, instead of looking joyful, was the image of despair.

"Alas the day! What shall I do with my doublet and hose?" she cried. "Where is he? What did he say? When did you see him? Where did you leave him? When will you see him again? Answer me quick!"

"My mouth is not of a size to answer so many questions at once; it would require a dozen tongues," said Celia.

"Well, say quick: does he know I am in this forest, and wearing men's clothes? Is he looking as well as the day he wrestled, or has he grown thinner?" she asked anxiously.

"It is not easy to answer all the questions of a lover," said Celia; "but to answer one — I found him under a tree, like a dropt acorn."

"Go on," said Rosalind.

"There lay he, stretched along like a wounded knight."

"A wounded knight!" cried Rosalind, in sudden alarm.

But Celia told her there was no cause to fear, for the young man was dressed like a hunter.

"He comes to kill my heart," sighed Rosalind, but much relieved.

"Soft!" whispered Celia suddenly; "listen! There are voices; someone is coming. It is he!"

Quickly they withdrew under the shadow of the trees. And, sure enough, who should Rosalind see in the distance but Orlando approaching with another man in hunter's dress. It was Jacques, one of the lords in attendance on the banished Duke; but this, of course, they did not know. The two men did not appear to be enjoying each other's society; in fact, the first thing the maidens overheard was this same Jacques remarking wearily that he would much prefer to be walking alone. Orlando answered promptly that this was precisely his own feeling.

This did not appear to offend the other; he seemed merely bored — bored to death by his companion. This is an effect that people in love have often, even in these days, upon people who do not happen to be in love.

"God be with you," said he in a gentle, pitying tone. "Let us meet as little as we can."

Orlando did not like his tone, while as for Rosalind, her blood boiled with indignation.

"I desire only that we may be better strangers," rejoined Orlando.

"I pray you, mar no more trees with writing love songs in their barks," observed Jacques coldly.

"I pray you, mar no more of my verses with misreading them so vilely," Orlando retorted hotly.

The murder was out; no doubt now about the cause of disagreement. It was clear from this Jacques also had plucked a poem, and had been caught by the author reading it aloud, and reading it badly.

"Rosalind is your love's name?" inquired Jacques more civilly.

And poor Orlando, for lack of a better confidant, and because lovers love to speak of their beloved to anyone rather than no one, answered that it was. Both maidens were listening intently. Rosalind noticed that Orlando wore her chain.

"I do not like her name," remarked Jacques, with a bored sigh.

"There was no thought of pleasing you when she was christened," said Orlando; and Rosalind laughed to herself for joy to hear him.

"How tall is she? " Jacques asked. "Just as high as my heart," replied Orlando proudly.

His hand stole softly to the chain round his neck, and the heart of Rosalind beat in tune with his own.

"You have a nimble wit," said Jacques, " and are full of pretty answers. Sit down here with me, and let us rail against our mistresses, the world, and all our misery."

Jacques sat down under a tree and sighed profoundly.

"I will rail against no one but myself, against whom I know most faults," said Orlando. Rail against his mistress Rosalind, indeed! — his goddess, his star!

Jacques looked at him with a gentle, melancholy gaze.

"The worst fault you have is to be in love," he remarked regretfully.

"Tis a fault I would not change for your best virtue," answered Orlando.

Jacques shrugged his shoulders. Clearly this young man's condition was quite hopeless.

"I was seeking for a fool when I found you," he observed quietly.

"Your fool is drowned in the brook: look in it and you will see him," replied Orlando, with spirit.

"Meaning me?" said Jacques, with another sigh. "Ah well! I'll tarry no longer with you," he added, rising. "Fare you well, good Signor Love."

"Adieu, good Monsieur Melancholy," replied Orlando, thankful to get rid of him at last.

"I will go and speak to him like a saucy boy," whispered Rosalind to Celia; and they emerged together, as if having just arrived on the scene. With a careless swagger Rosalind went up to Orlando and inquired the time.

He answered, he could not tell, there being no clocks in the forest. But he liked the look of the merry youth, and they entered into conversation, Rosalind keeping well to her character of saucy boy. Celia listened, and wondered what she would be up to next. After a time Orlando inquired where they dwelt. When Rosalind said they were shepherds, and lived in the forest, he was puzzled, remarking that the youth did not speak with the accent of a shepherd, but had a finer speech.

"So I have been told by many," answered Rosalind airily; "but an old uncle of mine, a priest, taught me to speak, and many other things besides," she added. "In his youth he once fell in love, and many is the lecture I have heard him read against it. I

thank God I am not a woman to be afflicted with all the giddy faults to which that sex are liable — every one of them."

"Indeed!" said Orlando. "Can you tell me some of their faults now — the principal ones?"

"Oh, there are none principal; each one seems monstrous till its fellow comes to match it."

"I pray you recount me some of them," Orlando begged.

But Rosalind shook her head, saying she kept her medicine for those who were sick. Now, if only she could find that one who haunted the forest, spoiling the young trees with his carvings, and odes hanging from every bough, to him she would gladly give some wise counsel.

"I am that very man, so love-shaken," confessed Orlando. "I pray you tell me your remedy."

"Nay, nay," said Rosalind; "you have none of the marks of this complaint upon you."

"What are the marks? " asked Orlando. He was beginning to find this saucy shepherd-boy very entertaining.

"A lean cheek," said the mock shepherd-boy, "which you have not. A sunken blue eye, which you have not; a doleful spirit, which you have not; a neglected beard, which you have not — but I pardon you for that, since I perceive it has not yet had time to grow. Then your stocking should be ungartered, your sleeve unbuttoned, your shoe untied, and everything about you showing a careless desolation. But you are all spick and span and careful of your appearance, as one who loves himself rather than someone else."

Orlando was too much in love to see any joke in this or note the twinkle in the shepherd-boy's eye. That is another sign of the complaint which Rosalind forgot to mention — all sense of humour is obliterated for the time. He answered sadly:

"Fair youth, I would I could make thee believe I love."

"Me believe it? " cried Rosalind. "You may as soon make her you love believe it. Love is a madness," she added, "but I think I can cure it."

Orlando answered that much as he suffered he had no wish to be cured.

But Rosalind then suggested a cure that Orlando thought would divert and amuse him, while still keeping his thoughts fixed ever on his love. It was this: that she, Ganymede, should pretend to be Rosalind, and Orlando should come every day to the cottage and pretend to make love to her. He agreed gladly. "Show me the way to your cottage, good youth," he said.

"Nay, but you must call me Rosalind," said the mock shepherd-boy, as she led the way, delighted at the success of her little plan.

Chapter 3

From Orlando, Rosalind and Celia very soon learnt all about Duke Ferdinand, and great was their joy to know he was safe and well and with his followers encamped not far off. Rosalind would have made herself known to her father then and there, but for her desire to keep up her disguise for a while with Orlando, and while playing this little game of pretence, test his love for herself before she let him know of her own love for him.

Orlando had taken refuge in the forest, like Duke Ferdinand, to escape from his own brother, who he discovered to be plotting his destruction. It was this brother, Oliver, who had encouraged Orlando to challenge the champion wrestler Charles, hoping thereby to be rid of him. For Oliver was consumed by a deplorable jealousy of his younger brother, whom in his secret heart he admired for the noble qualities he himself did not possess. When Orlando, against all expectation,

overthrew the champion, Oliver devised a new plot against his life, and would have burnt down his house that same night had not the faithful old servant, Adam, warned Orlando of danger and helped him to escape.

Together they had made the same journey as Rosalind and Celia, and arrived in much the same exhausted condition. The poor old Adam was at the point of death for lack of food and drink, when fortunately Orlando, who had gone in search of aid, came upon the Duke and his company just about to begin their supper of venison spread out under the trees. Hearing his story, the Duke received him with a hearty welcome as the son of his old friend Sir Roland de Boys. But before Orlando would touch a morsel himself he hastened back for old Adam, whom he bore in his arms to the Duke's supper. Food and wine soon restored his strength, and from that time he and his young master cast in their lot with Duke Ferdinand and his followers. It was in this manner Orlando had come to be in the company of the melancholy Jacques.

The little game Rosalind had devised for seeing Orlando every day pleased her well, for Orlando, finding a curious likeness between the shepherd-boy and his beloved lady, was content enough to go and talk of love, and play at being the lover till he could do so in good earnest.

On one occasion he arrived an hour late at the little cottage, Rosalind rated him soundly:

"You a lover," she cried, "and break an hour's promise in love. An you serve me such another trick, never come in my sight more."

"Pardon me, dear Rosalind," said Orlando, in mock repentance.

"Nay, an you be so tardy, come no more in my sight," repeated Rosalind, pouting. " I had as lief be woo'd by a snail."

So they had their mock quarrels as well as mock love-making, and always Orlando found sweet comfort in any excuse for talking of his lady.

"I take some joy to say you are my Rosalind, because I would be talking of her," said he.

"Well, in her person I say — I will not have you," said Rosalind, her eyes sparkling with mischief.

"Then in mine own person I die," replied Orlando.

Rosalind laughed lightly.

"The poor world is almost six thousand years old, and in all this time there was not any man died in a love cause. The foolish chroniclers have said so, indeed, but these are all lies. Men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love."

"I would not have my Rosalind of this mind, for her frown would kill me," said Orlando, with a sigh.

The sigh instantly melted the heart of the shepherd-boy.

"By this hand it will not kill a fly," she answered. "But come now"— she smiled on him — "I will be your Rosalind in a more on-coming mood, and ask what you will, I will grant it."

"Then love me, Rosalind," said Orlando, with fervour.

"Faith will I," she laughed — "Fridays, Saturdays, and all." Then they called Celia to join in the game and pretend she was the priest to marry them. And Celia said with mock solemnity:

"Will you, Orlando, have to wife this Rosalind? "

"I will," said Orlando heartily, and his thoughts flew far away to the Rosalind of his dreams, little thinking they had no need to fly at all.

"Tell me, how long would you have her? " laughed Rosalind.

"For ever and a day," he answered promptly.

"Say a day without the ever," cried Rosalind, loving to tease her lover, now she was so sure of him. "Men are April when they woo, December when they wed. Maids are May when they are maids, but the sky changes when they are wives. I will be more jealous of thee than a Barberry cock-pigeon over his hen; more clamorous than a parrot against rain; more new-fangled than an ape, more giddy than a monkey. I will weep for nothing like Diana in the fountain, and this when you are disposed to be merry. I will laugh like a hyena when you are inclined to weep."

"Ah, but will my Rosalind do so?" asked Orlando, somewhat anxiously, for he felt after all he knew little of women.

"By my life," answered his tormentor, "she will do as I do."

"Oh, but she is wise," answered the faithful Orlando.

"The wiser the waywarder," Rosalind assured him. "If you try to stop a woman's wit it will out at the window; stop that, it will out at the keyhole; stop that, it will fly with the smoke out at the chimney."

It was strange how much this saucy boy seemed to know about women. He not only amused Orlando but puzzled him sorely, and for the life of him Orlando could not help being half in earnest over this funny game of love-making, because of the youth's curious likeness to his lost Rosalind. The hours passed quickly in her company, that was certain, and on no account would Orlando have missed these daily visits to the cottage.

When he said adieu that day, Celia scolded Rosalind for carrying the joke too far, but Rosalind shut her mouth with kisses.

"Oh, coz, coz, my pretty coz," she cried, in high spirits, "if you but knew how deep I am in love! But no one could measure the depth, for it is deep as the bay of Portugal, which has no bottom. I tell thee, Aliena," she said, growing serious for a

moment, "I cannot live out of sight of Orlando. I'll go find a shadow, and sigh till he come."

Orlando, when he left Rosalind that day, had promised faithfully to be back within two hours, but the two hours passed, and still there was no sign of Orlando. Rosalind became impatient for his return; waiting under the shadow of the trees and sighing was not amusing. Celia teased her by saying, without doubt her Orlando had gone forth with his bow and arrows and fallen asleep out of pure love, thinking of her.

What had happened was this: Orlando, having attended the Duke at dinner according to his duty, was on his way back to the cottage, when he saw a man lying, ragged and worn, full length under a tree, and slowly coiling itself about his neck a huge and poisonous snake of green and gold. Never thinking of danger to himself, Orlando sprang upon the reptile to break its back with his stick, but quick as lightning the snake glided off among the bushes. Orlando was about to pursue it, when suddenly he perceived a second danger. This time it was a lioness crouching on the ground, her cat-like eyes fixed on the sleeping man. He looked at the sleeper, and to his astonishment recognized his own brother Oliver, he who had plotted so much evil against him. For one moment he thought of leaving him to his fate and making sure his own escape, but the next he leapt upon the lioness, whose mind being occupied with the prey she was watching had not even appeared to see Orlando. Now she turned her attention to him, however, and had it not been that she was in a weak condition from starvation things would have gone badly with Orlando, and Rosalind have waited in vain for his return. As it was, after a terrible struggle, in which Orlando's arm was badly hurt, the lioness fell dead at his feet.

The smashing of branches and growls and groans of the wild beast awoke Oliver from his deep sleep. He started up to find

that the brave youth who had slain the lioness was no other than his own brother Orlando.

Tears of repentance stood in his eyes as he clasped his brother's hand and begged his forgiveness while he thanked him for his life. Then each recounted to the other how he came to be in the forest, and Orlando, in his anxiety to get food and decent clothes for Oliver, forgot all about his own hurt. Together they hastened to the Duke's camp, and there received generous entertainment and fresh array, after which Orlando led Oliver to his own cave to rest. But by this time Orlando's wounded arm, which had never ceased bleeding, suddenly made him faint away from loss of blood. Oliver rushed to his assistance, laid him gently down, bound up his wound, and soon recovered him with a restoring draught.

As soon as Orlando could speak, he told his brother of his promise to return in two hours to the shepherd-boy, whom in sport he called his Rosalind; and he begged Oliver to hasten to the cottage and explain the events which had happened to delay him, so that he might be excused for his broken promise.

Not until Oliver saw the colour again return to his brother's cheek would he be persuaded to leave him; then he went, taking with him, in proof of his story, a bandage dyed with the blood from Orlando's wounded arm.

Rosalind and Celia, tired of waiting, had wandered forth into the forest, no doubt hoping to meet Orlando and rate him soundly for his tardiness. Instead of this, however, they met Oliver, who inquired of them the way to the sheepcote fenced about with olive-trees, to which his brother had directed him.

Celia answered, telling him to follow the stream, and on the right bank, where the osiers grew, he would find the place, but at this moment there was no one in the house.

Oliver looked from one to the other, and then asked if they were not the pair who owned the house, and for whom he was looking — a brother and sister.

"We are," said Celia.

"Then," answered Oliver, "Orlando doth commend him to you both, and to this youth he calls his Rosalind he sends this bandage."

Rosalind gazed with dismay at the blood-stained bandage.

"What must we understand by this?" she asked.

Then Oliver told how Orlando had twice risked his life to save that of his elder brother, whom he had by accident found asleep and exhausted in the forest.

"His elder brother!" cried Celia and Rosalind. " But we have heard of him — a most unnatural, unkind brother."

Oliver agreed with them. "Indeed he was. I know him well," he added sadly, "for I am he."

Both maidens looked at him in astonishment, for Oliver, since repenting of his ugly conduct to Orlando, had changed not only within, but also without, and no one to look at him could have thought him capable of unkindness, much less of cruelty. His face bore the traces of sorrow and humility, and when he confessed frankly all his guilt and his deep remorse, the heart of the gentle Celia went out to him in sudden pity and sympathy.

"It was I, yet it is no longer I, who had such thoughts and did such deeds," he assured her.

But Rosalind was thinking of her lover more than of his brother.

"What of this blood-stained cloth? " she asked anxiously, for as yet she did not know whose blood had been shed, nor why Orlando had not come.

Oliver, wishing to break it gently, had not yet spoken of Orlando's wound. Now, however, he related all, and how his brother had kept it secret till they got to the cave, when on a sudden he had fainted for loss of blood.

And as he told this part of his tale, the shepherd-boy, Ganymede, swayed and turned white as a lily flower. Celia rushed forward and caught Rosalind as she fell. Oliver, too, lent his aid, and comforted Celia by saying how many people will swoon when they look on blood, but Celia knew it was more than that which had caused her cousin's sudden faint.

It was but for a minute. Rosalind quickly remembered she must not betray herself, and struggled to her feet, laughing at herself and declaring it was all pretence, just to keep up the character of the girl Rosalind.

But Oliver shook his head.

"This was not counterfeit; it was good earnest," said he.

"Counterfeit, I assure you," murmured Rosalind, as she leaned on his arm and walked unsteadily. Celia noted how pale her cheek was still, and hurried her home, assisted by Oliver.

"I pray you, tell your brother how well I pretended," said Rosalind. But Oliver looked at Celia and smiled.

And now that strange thing which had happened to Rosalind when she first saw Orlando began straightway to happen to Celia. At first she found herself moved to pity by Oliver's sad eyes, which looked at her so admiringly. Pity, we know, is akin to love, and sympathy is, in a sort, first cousin to both. From pity Celia passed quickly to sympathy as Oliver expressed his deep remorse at having so treated a brother of such noble qualities as Orlando. And when he proceeded that evening in the cottage to tell her of his resolve to make amends by giving up all his father's fortune to his brother and living as a shepherd in the forest to the end of his days, if only a certain

sweet shepherdess would consent to share his lot, then Celia found that, strange to say, she loved.

Great was the surprise of Orlando when he heard how his brother had already wooed and won the fair Aliena.

"Is it possible that on so little acquaintance you should like her?" he said; "that but seeing you should love her, and loving woo, and wooing, she should grant consent?"

It had never seemed to him the least strange that he had fallen in love with Rosalind as she placed her chain round his neck. Yet this had taken place in even shorter time. But such is the way with people in love.

It was decided between the brothers that the marriage of Oliver and Aliena should take place without delay, and Orlando undertook to make all the preparations for a great merrymaking, to which the Duke and his followers should be invited.

When Ganymede, the mock shepherd, came to see how Orlando's wound was healing, she found him in very low spirits, sighing over his own sad lot. The sight of Oliver with his real lady-love had made him feel that he could no longer take any comfort in the little game of pretence with which he had whiled away so many a pleasant hour with Ganymede.

"How bitter a thing it is to look into happiness through another man's eyes!" said he.

"I can no longer serve your turn for Rosalind, then?" inquired Ganymede.

Orlando shook his head despondently:

"I can no longer live on thinking," he replied.

Then this surprising shepherd-boy told him a wonderful secret.

"If you really love the lady Rosalind as much as it seems," said he, "I will cause her to appear drest as a bride and ready to

marry you in the same hour that Aliena is married to your brother Oliver. For being versed in magic arts learned from my uncle, a good man though a sorcerer, I can work this wonder."

People in love can swallow a wondrous large dose if it promises the thing they desire. And so Orlando, his heart beating high with hope, wisely never questioned this tale of sorcerer-uncles and magic, but went straight to the point, which was getting his true-love by hook or by crook.

"Speakest thou in sober earnest?" said he, for there was a lurking mischief in the eye of this Ganymede.

"By my life I do," came the ready answer. "Therefore, put on your best array, bid your friends, for if you will be married you shall, and to Rosalind if you will."

Orlando now hurried off to the Duke to ask his permission to marry his daughter, and to tell him of the surprising promise made by the shepherd-boy.

"Dost thou believe, Orlando, that the boy can do all this that he hath promised? " said the Duke doubtfully. His doubt shook Orlando for a moment, and he answered:

"I sometimes do believe, and sometimes do not."

While they were speaking together, who should come up to them but this same shepherd-boy. The Duke had met Ganymede before and spoken with him, attracted by a curious likeness he perceived to his daughter Rosalind, though he had not seen her for so many years. He had even wondered if this boy might not be some kinsman, and had inquired of what parentage he was.

Thereupon the saucy Ganymede had answered the Duke:

"Of as good as your highness." And the Duke had laughed heartily, little dreaming how near the truth the saucy boy had spoken.

Rosalind had already informed the Duke that she knew of the whereabouts of his daughter, and she now asked him whether he would consent to her marriage with Orlando, if by her wonderful arts she produced the absent Rosalind.

The Duke, who had the highest opinion of Orlando, agreed willingly, and all being settled to everyone's satisfaction, Rosalind went back to her cottage to work the wonderful transformation which should so surprise and delight her father and lover.

When Rosalind left them the Duke turned to Orlando.

"Dost thou believe, Orlando," said he, " that the boy can do all this that he hath promised? "

Orlando, equally perplexed, answered doubtfully:

"I sometimes do believe, and sometimes do not."

"I do remember in this shepherd-boy some lively touches of my daughter's favour," observed the Duke thoughtfully.

"My lord," answered Orlando eagerly, "the first time that I ever saw him me thought he was a brother to your daughter. But, my good lord," he continued, dismissing this idea of a likeness as absurd, "this boy is forest born and hath been tutored by his uncle, whom he reports to be a great magician, obscured in the circle of this forest."

They had not long to wait before the mystery was to be solved.

Presently came a sound of sweet music, a joyous marriage hymn, and through the trees hand in hand walked two lovely damsels attired in bridal raiment. They were no other than Rosalind and Celia.

Going up to her father, who could hardly believe his eyes for joy, Rosalind first embraced him, saying:

"To you I give myself, for I am yours."

"If there be truth in sight," said the Duke, "you are my daughter."

Then turning to Orlando, who gazed at her in wonder and delight, she repeated the same glad words:

"To you I give myself, for I am yours."

"If there be truth in sight," cried her happy lover, "you are my Rosalind."

Never was a happier May-day than the wedding-day of Rosalind and Celia, and never were two happier couples than these forest lovers. To crown all, just as they were in the midst of the marriage feast, a messenger rode up in hot haste to tell the Duke a most remarkable piece of news. His brother Frederick had suddenly come to a better mind, repented of his sins, and determined to become a holy hermit. He now renounced the kingdom and the crown, and restored it to his brother, the rightful owner, of whom he begged forgiveness.

So the banished Duke had restored to him on the same day his daughter and his kingdom, and added to this a son-in-law he loved and trusted.

Celia, rejoicing in her father's repentance, gladly said good-bye for ever to the life of a Princess, and settled down happily with her Oliver to the simple healthy life of the forest.

Twelfth Night

(*What You Will* by Shakespeare)

Chapter 1

In the beautiful city of Illyria there reigned a Duke, Orsino by name. He was young, handsome, rich — in fact, fortune had favoured him in every way. There was but one thing wanting in his cup of happiness. He had fallen desperately in love with a beautiful lady in the city, and she would have nothing to say to him. She also was young and rich, and it would have appeared that these two should make a most happy couple; but alas! the little god, with his bow and arrows, had only shot one shaft, and that had entered the Duke's heart, and left the lady fancy free.

She had, at the time our story commences, lost her only brother, and while very truly mourning his loss, she made it the excuse for not leaving her house and gardens, and for refusing to admit any messenger sent her by the Duke. He, poor fellow, continued day by day sending her presents and entreaties; nothing, however, softened her heart towards him.

It chanced that one day a certain sea-captain, who was acquainted with some of the Duke's people, came to the city accompanied by a very good-looking young man. He looked very young, almost girlish, with deep dark eyes and short brown curls, on which was set a most becoming little cap with a jaunty feather. He was not very tall, but his figure was so straight and slim that it added to his height, and, as was the fashion in those times, he wore doublet and hose, well cut and trim, of a good deep green colour, and his shoes had plain solid-looking silver buckles. Altogether he was a very attractive youth, and when his friend the sea-captain managed to have him presented to the Duke, the Duke at once liked him, and engaged him as one of

his pages, soon favouring him more than any of the others, and entrusting him with the secrets of his unhappy heart. After a while, finding him so sympathetic and of so sweet and gentle a manner, he resolved to send him as his messenger to his cold lady-love, hoping that Cesario — that was the page's name — could speak more persuasively for him than any other had done.

Now, this Cesario, this handsome, attractive young fellow, was really no page, or no youth at all. And this was his sad story. Two young people, brother and sister, twins and orphans, were sailing from their native town Messaline, when the ship encountered a great storm, and nearly all lives were lost. The captain saved the fainting girl, whose name was Viola, and with a few sailors managed to get to the shore. The last they saw of Sebastian, the brother, was that, having tied himself to a mast, he was battling in the waves. Viola, recovering consciousness when they came to shore, asked the friendly captain where they found themselves.

"This is Illyria, lady," he answered.

"And what should I do in Illyria," cried poor Viola, "when my brother is in Elysium! Perchance he is not drowned. What think you?"

"It is only by chance that you yourself are saved," answered the captain; and he tried to comfort her with the thought that as the waves had brought their frail barque to shore, so might her brother be carried thither on his mast.

In the meantime poor Viola, without friends, excepting the kind captain, or money, or clothes, was much perplexed as to what she could do in this strange city. She questioned the captain of the people of the place, and he told her, being bred and born within three hours of the city, that he had often heard of the noble Duke, Orsino by name.

"Orsino!" said Viola; "I have heard my father name him. He was a bachelor then."

"And so is now," answered the captain, "or was so very late. For but a month ago I went from hence, and then 'twas murmured that he did seek the love of fair Olivia."

"Oh that I could serve that lady!" cried Viola, "and so wait until I know what has happened to my poor brother."

The captain shook his head. "I fear that cannot be — for she will admit no one, not even the Duke."

Viola thought for a while, looking hard at the captain as though to read his very heart; then telling him how she trusted him, and felt sure he was as good and kind as he looked, she asked him to help her with her plan. This was that he should procure her garments suitable to a page, and she resolved to have them made exactly like those worn by her brother on the day of the shipwreck, and that then he should get someone to present her to the Duke, as one desirous of becoming his page.

The captain thought the idea good; but Viola had such a winning way with her that she generally managed to get people to think her ideas good; and he promised to keep her secret closely, and to help her all in his power.

So they came to some quiet little hostel in the city, where Viola changed from a very charming maiden into a fine handsome young man, called Cesario. And in that disguise the Duke took her as his page, and gave her his trust and affection.

Poor Viola, now called Cesario, soon gave the Duke more, for she fell hopelessly in love with him, and when he sighed for his cruel Olivia, she sighed over her own heart's trouble.

No wonder the Duke found her so sympathetic!

But Viola was perfectly trustworthy, and she resolved to help the Duke with his love affair most loyally.

One day, soon after her arrival, the Duke called his new page and sent her to the lady Olivia's house, saying: "Be not denied, stand at her doors, and tell them there thy foot shall grow, till thou hast entrance."

"Sure, my noble lord," said Viola, "if she be so abandoned to her sorrow as it is said, she never will admit me!"

"Be clamorous and leap all civil bounds, rather than make unprofitable return," urged the Duke.

"Say I do speak with her, my lord, what then?"

"Oh, then unfold the passion of my love. It will become thee well to act my woes. She will attend it better in thy youth than in a messenger of more grave aspect," said the Duke.

"I think not so. my lord "; and the page shook her head doubtfully.

"Dear lad believe it," assured the Duke, "for they do yet belie thy happy years that say thou art a man. Diana's lip is not more smooth and red, and thy small pipe is as the maiden voice, shrill and sound. I know thy star is right apt for this affair." Then he patted Cesario kindly on the shoulder, and bade some of his servants attend her. "Prosper well in this," he added, "and thou shalt live as freely as thy lord, and call his fortune thine."

"I'll do my best to woo your lady," answered Viola, and as she went on her way she said sadly to herself, "but whoe'er I woo, myself would be his wife."

Chapter 2

The lady Olivia had a beautiful house on the outskirts of the town. It was enclosed in a high white wall, and within lovely roses and jasmine and honeysuckle made a mantle for its coldness. So big was the enclosure that one could wander about in little woods, or pass through lovely rose-gardens; broad

terraces of smooth grass led one to where fountains played in the sunshine, and marble seats and beautiful statues glistened white.

The Lady Olivia had no need to leave her own domain if she wished to walk, or even bathe or boat. But she unheeding the beautiful world, had vowed to weep for her brother in seclusion for seven years. Perhaps this was a foolish vow, and hard to keep — we shall see. At any rate, she did not care to admit the Duke or his messengers, for he had quite failed to touch her heart. She had many servants, and being of a kind disposition, she had allowed an old relation of hers, one Sir Toby Belch, to make his home in her house. He was not a very satisfactory relation to have, for he loved the society found in ale-houses, and he never minded how much he drank, nor how drunk he became; but, notwithstanding, he was a good-natured old soul, and very fond of a joke. He and Olivia's maid, Maria, became great friends over their fun, and they both heartily detested Olivia's steward, Malvolio, who was of a very prying, overbearing disposition. However, he was quite honest, and saved his lady all trouble in the management of her estate, and so she left all business to him, and wrapped herself in her sorrow.

Sir Toby had a friend, Sir Andrew Ague-cheek, a poor sort of carpet-knight and a great bragger, but with whom he had this in common — that they both liked good canary wine and sack; and Sir Toby had taken the strange idea into his head that he would make a match between his young cousin Olivia and this very unheroic knight, Sir Andrew Ague-cheek.

"Truly," thought Sir Toby, "if Andrew were master here, then we two could do as we please; get rid of the interfering Malvolio, and lead a jolly life."

Sir Andrew sometimes was for giving up this purpose in despair, for the lady never noticed him, and he modestly thought that the Duke had more chance to win her than he had.

"She'll none of the Duke," assured him Sir Toby, "Tut! there's life in it, man."

"I'll stay a month longer," nodded Sir Andrew, trying to look wise and determined. "I am a fellow of the strangest mind in the world." So with new hope he proposed to "set about some revels."

With the aid of Olivia's Fool — for every rich and well-ordered house in those days had a " fool," and this so-called fool needed to be wiser than his neighbours, for he had to make jokes and keep everyone in good-humour — with his aid Sir Toby and Sir Andrew did indeed set about revels; they drank and they sang, and "made the welkin ring, and roused the night-owl," as Sir Toby said, and all to such purpose that presently Maria, the maid, burst into the room, crying:

"What a caterwauling do you keep here! "

But she could not sober them; they asked her to join in the fun, and offered her some canary wine; even the threat that Malvolio was coming only made them laugh and shout the more.

Then in walked Malvolio — grim and stern, and full of importance. He looked disapprovingly at the two red-faced knights, and at the empty bottles; he had to be somewhat civil to Sir Toby, as a relative of his mistress, but this kind of thing in the late hours was going too far!

"My masters! are you mad, or what are you?" he began severely. "Have you no wit, manners, nor honesty, but to gabble like tinkers at this time of night?"

Sir Toby, telling Maria to fill up his glass, turned on Malvolio.

"Art any more than a steward? Dost think because thou art virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale? "

This was too much for Malvolio; warning them all, and Maria specially, of their lady's displeasure, he went off in wrath, and his departure was followed by a shout of laughter, and Maria bade him, "Go shake his ears!"

But when he had gone she turned to the three merry men, and told them they had better get them to bed for that night, and she had a happy thought in her head for paying Malvolio out for all old scores.

"I know I can do it," she added, with a twinkle in her eye.

"Tell us, tell us!" cried Sir Toby. "What wilt thou do?"

Maria leaned over the table, and they all crowded their heads together as she whispered with a finger on her lips:

"I will drop in his way some obscure letters of love, wherein, by the colour of his beard, the shape of his leg, the manner of his gait, the expression of his eye, forehead and complexion, he shall find himself most feeling personated. I can write very like my lady; we can sometimes hardly make distinction of our hands."

"Excellent!" chuckled Sir Toby. "I smell a device. He shall think by the letters that thou wilt drop that they come from the lady, and that she's in love with him? "

"Oh! it will be admirable!" said Sir Andrew, clapping his hands.

"Sport royal, I warrant. I know my physic will work with him," went on Maria gleefully. "I will plant you two and let the Fool make a third, where he shall find the letter; observe his construction of it. For this night, to bed, and dream on the event."

So saying, she bundled them all out of the room, blew out the candles and oil-lamp, and then tripped off to her own chamber, laughing as she thought what a letter she would concoct for the luckless Malvolio to find.

Chapter 3

The next day the Lady Olivia was sitting in her rose-garden talking to her "Fool" and Malvolio, when Maria came to announce to her that a young gentleman much desired to speak with her.

"From the Count Orsino, is it?" asked the lady wearily.

"I know not, madam. 'Tis a fair young man, and well attended."

"Go you, Malvolio: if it be a suit from the Count, I am sick, or not at home, what you will to dismiss it." And Olivia turned to her work, a beautiful piece of embroidery in a large standing frame whereon she and Maria spent much time.

Malvolio returned, walking, as was his manner, with great pomp, and carrying his tall stick of office, without which emblem he never moved.

"Madam," he said with a bow, "yond young fellow swears he wilt speak with you. I told him you were sick. He takes on him to understand so much, and therefore comes he to speak with you. I told him you were asleep. He seems to have a foreknowledge of that, too, and therefore comes he to speak with you. What is to be said to him lady."He's fortified against any denial."

"Tell him he shall not speak with me." Olivia spoke sternly, and went on with her work.

"He has been told so, and he says he will stand at your door like a sheriff's post, but he will speak with you!"

Malvolio looked as he felt, dismayed at such boldness; but a messenger from the Duke must needs be treated with some respect.

"What manner of man is he?"

Olivia paused to look up.

"Of very ill manner," answered Malvolio; "he will speak with you, will you or not."

"Of what personage and years is he?" asked Olivia, beginning to smile.

Malvolio shrugged his shoulders. "Not yet old enough for a man, nor young enough for a boy, as a squash is before 'tis a peascod, or a codling when 'tis almost an apple. He is very well favoured, and he speaks very shrewdly."

That determined Olivia. "Let him approach," she said. "Maria, give me my veil; come, throw it over my face. We will once more hear Orsino's embassy."

And then across the sunny green grass came Malvolio, walking pompously in front of a young man, of so easy a manner, so straight and slim a figure, and as he doffed his cap and bowed before her, she noticed his hair of such warm brown curls, and his eyes as he looked merrily at her veiled face, so open and trusting, that she felt a curious little thrill at her heart. This was a messenger very different to all others that had come to her from her noble lover.

"Most radiant, exquisite, and unmatchable beauty," began Cesario. "I pray you, tell me if this be the lady of the house, for I never saw her. I would be loath to cast away my speech, for besides that it is excellently well written, I have taken great pains to learn it."

"Whence came you, sir?" asked Olivia, trying to speak severely.

"I can say little more than I have studied, and that question's out of my part," said the messenger coolly; "but if you be the lady of the house, I will on with my speech in your praise, and then show you the heart of my message."

"Come to what is important in it. I forgive you the praise," answered Olivia.

"Alas! I took great pains to study it, and 'tis poetical." The page said this with so comic an air, that Olivia was constrained to laugh.

"Give us the place alone," she said, turning to her attendants, and when they had gone — Maria departing most unwillingly, for she, too, liked the looks of this pert young page — Olivia turned to him, and said: "Now, sir — what is your text?"

"Most sweet lady — "

"A comforting doctrine, and much may be said of it," interrupted Olivia, laughing. "Where lies your text?"

"In Orsino's bosom."

"In his bosom? In what chapter of his bosom?"

"In the first of his heart," said Cesario, with earnestness.

"Oh, I have read it; it is heresy. Have you no more to say?" Olivia answered lightly.

"Good madam, let me see your face."

Olivia could see very well through her veil, but its soft white folds hid all but a flash of dark eyes from the beholders; somehow she felt she would like this young man to see how fair she was, but still she answered with raillery: "We will draw the curtain and show you the picture. Look you, sir, such a one I was this present; is it not well done?"

Viola looked with eager and somewhat jealous eyes on the face her master loved so well, and looking, felt that indeed it was a lovely face; somewhat sad, but for that she, too, mourning a dear brother, could feel great sympathy, and the grey eyes that met hers, and seemed to carry a message with them, were very soft and tender.

"Excellently done — if God did all," she said at last.

Olivia laughed to hide her own feeling.

"Oh, sir! 'tis engrained; 'twill endure wind and weathers."

"'Tis beauty truly blent, whose red and white Nature's own sweet and cunning hand laid on. But, lady, I see what you are; you are too proud! My lord and master loves you. Oh, such a love could but be recompensed though you were crowned the queen of beauty! "

Very earnestly now spoke Viola, remembering her mission, and striving to forget her own love, or to sacrifice it for her dear master's happiness.

"How does he love me?"

Olivia looked long at the youth; surely he should know, too, of love, if those dark eyes spoke true.

"With adoration, fertile tears, with groans that thunder love, with sighs of fire!" answered Cesario.

Olivia rose from her chair; she spoke coldly.

"Your lord does know my mind; I cannot love him. Yet I suppose him virtuous, know him noble, a gracious person; but yet I cannot love him. He might have took his answer long ago."

"If I did love you in my master's flame, with such a suffering, in your denial I would find no sense, I would not understand it," urged Viola.

"Why, what would you do?"

Olivia turned to this bold page. It pleased her somehow to hear this youth talk of love, even of the Duke's love.

"I would make a willow cabin at your gate, and call upon my soul within the house. I would holla your name to the echoing hills, and make the babbling gossip of the air cry out, 'Olivia!' Oh, you should not rest between the elements of air and earth, but you should pity me!"

Olivia looked down as she said softly, "You might do much." Then she looked up suddenly, and asked: "What is your parentage?"

"Above my fortunes," Viola answered, a little surprised at the question; "yet my state is well. I am a gentleman."

Olivia paused; then she said with quiet determination:

"Get you to your lord; I cannot love him. Let him send no more; unless," and she spoke more softly, "unless you come to me again — to tell me how he takes it," she added quickly. "Fare you well. I thank you for your pains."

She loosened a small embroidered bag from her side and offered it. "Spend this for me."

"I am no fee'd post, lady; keep your purse," said Viola, with a touch of anger. "My master, not myself, lacks recompense. Farewell, fair cruelty."

With a low bow Viola turned hurriedly, and walked out of the garden. Olivia followed with her eyes, and murmured softly to herself:

"'What is your parentage?' 'Above my fortunes yet my state is well. I am a gentleman.' I'll be sworn thou art. Thy tongue, thy face, thy limbs, thy action and spirit, do give thee five-fold blazon!"

She sank into her chair, and looked again across the sunny lawn where the page had passed, and sighed and sighed.

"How now!" she said to herself. "Even so quickly may one catch the plague! Methinks I feel this youth's perfections with an invisible and subtle stealth to creep in at my eyes."

The lady Olivia was not one to sit and sigh and do nothing; she was accustomed to command and to be obeyed. If she should find this youth had lighted in her the love he pleaded for in vain for his master, then would she, from her queenly height,

stoop to the page and woo him, who could never dream of wooing her!

So she called to Malvolio.

"Run after that same peevish messenger, the Duke's man," she said; "he left this ring behind him, would I or not. Tell him I will none of it. Desire him not to flatter with his lord, nor hold him up with hopes. I am not for him. If that youth will come this way tomorrow I'll give him reasons for it. Hie thee, Malvolio!"

Malvolio, none too pleased with the errand, left his lady's presence, and she, wandering restlessly in her lovely garden and plucking here a rose and there another, without heeding, wondered and wondered how this adventure might end. Was this love? Was she in love? Could a page, a young man of whom she knew nothing but his humble estate, his frank bearing, and winning personality, could he have lighted in the heart she was proud to keep fancy free that same love that appeared so to torture the Duke?

"Alas!" she murmured to herself:

"I do I know not what, and fear to find
Mine eyes too great a flatterer for my mind.
Fate, show thy force; ourselves we do not know —
What is decreed must be; and be this so."

And finding much comfort in thus putting the responsibility on Fate, the Countess went indoors, and called Maria to come and help her dress.

Maria found her lady in a very strange, fanciful mood, and Maria, being very shrewd, put it all down to the visit of the Duke's fascinating messenger.

As Viola walked back to the Duke's house, she heard hurried steps behind her, and an irritated voice called: "Hie, you; stop!" and turning saw the tall, hard-featured steward of the lady she

had just left, beckoning her. She paused, and Malvolio caught her up, and began crossly:

"Were you not even now with the Countess Olivia?"

"Even now, sir."

"She returns this ring to you, sir. You might have saved me my pains to have taken it away yourself. She adds, moreover, that you should put your lord into a desperate assurance she will have none of him." Malvolio still spoke with irritation, and held out the ring; then remembering the rest of the message, he added to the wondering Viola: "And one thing more, that you never be so hardy as to come again in his affairs, unless it be to report your lord's taking of this. Receive it so."

Viola waved aside the proffered ring. She felt she could not take it, but neither could she betray the Countess to her servant, so she said:

"She took the ring of me. I'll none of it."

Malvolio still held out the ring.

"Come, sir, you peevishly threw it at her, and her will is it should be returned. If it be worthy stooping for, there it lies in your eye; if not, be it his that finds it."

With these words Malvolio threw the ring at Viola's feet and turned impatiently, muttering to himself curses on all silly pages who caused him to be sent running after them — a nice thing indeed for a man of his dignity!

Viola picked up the ring and looked at the glittering stone, reading quite surely the message it was meant to convey. Her woman's heart could read what the other woman's heart would say without words, and she shook her head over the pitifulness of it.

"I left no ring with her; what means this lady? Fortune forbid my outside have not charmed her! She made good view

of me. She loves me sure. If this be so, as it is, poor lady! it were better love a dream. My master loves her dearly, and I, poor wretch! love him as much; and she, mistaken, seems to dote on me! Now, alas the day! what thriftless sighs shall poor Olivia breathe!"

Then, placing the ring carefully in her doublet, she shrugged her shoulders with a sad smile, and went on her way thinking:

"O time, thou must untangle this, not I. It is too hard a knot for me to untie."

The Duke was whiling away the time with music; he found it very soothing. To him it was the food of love, and while his musicians played, his fancy, freed by the strains, wandered to his lady-love.

He turned to Viola.

"Come hither, boy. If ever thou dost love, in the sweet pangs of it remember me. How dost thou like this tune?"

Viola found that it was full of the echo of love.

The Duke looked at his young page, and marked his blushing cheek.

"By my life!" he said, "young though thou art, thou hast loved. Is it not so, boy?"

"A little, by your favour," answered Viola, growing quite abashed.

The Duke, delighted to find a fellow-sufferer, asked:

"What kind of woman is it?"

"Of your complexion," answered the page, looking up into his face.

"She is not worth thee, then," laughed the Duke. "What years hath she?"

"About your years, my lord;" and Viola smiled at her lord's look of wonder.

"Too old, by heaven, boy! Let thy love be younger than thyself; "and the Duke patted her kindly on the shoulder. This evidently was not a love to take seriously, so he returned to his own more interesting state, and in spite of the message of yesterday, he bade Cesario go once more to his "beloved cruelty."

"But if she cannot love you, sir?" urged Viola.

"I cannot so be answered," and the Duke looked as determined as Olivia had done.

"Sooth, but you must!" Viola spoke boldly. "Say that some lady, as perhaps there is, hath for your love as great a pang of heart as you have for Olivia. You cannot love her — you tell her so; must she not then be answered?"

The Duke pooh-poohed the idea.

"There is no woman's sides can bear the beating of so strong a passion as love doth give my heart; no woman's heart so big to hold so much. Make no compare between that love a woman can bear me and that I owe Olivia."

Viola looked at him curiously, but with a great tenderness in her eyes.

"Ay, but I know," and then she hesitated.

"What dost thou know?" inquired the Duke.

"Too well what love women to men may owe. In faith, they are as true of heart as we. My father had a daughter loved a man, as it might be perhaps, were I a woman, I should love your lordship."

Viola paused, and the Duke asked with interest:

"And what is her history?"

Viola shook her head mournfully.

"A blank, my lord. She never told her love, but let concealment, like a worm i' the bud, feed on her damask cheek. She pined in thought, and with a green and yellow melancholy, she sat like Patience on a monument, smiling at grief. Was this not love indeed? We men," went on Viola, trying to put on a very manly voice and air, " may say more, swear more indeed, but still we prove much in our vows, but little in our love."

"But died thy sister of her love, my boy?" the Duke asked anxiously.

Viola shook her head sadly.

"I am all the daughters of my father's house, and all the brothers, too, and yet I know not." Then, fearing that she might betray her secret, she asked with a sudden change of tone: "Sir, shall I to this lady?"

"Ay — that's the theme." The Duke roused himself out of a strange melancholy that Cesario's story of his sister had raised. He had begun to wonder if his love were any stronger than that of the young girl; he did not feel like dying of it. So he eagerly drew out a costly chain. "To her in haste," he said. "Give her this jewel. Say my love can give no place — bide no delay."

Chapter 4

Maria's little plot to make a fool of the cross-grained Malvolio was now ready in the shape of a most cunningly worded letter, written to imitate the handwriting of her lady, and so to mislead the unwary Malvolio into thinking it came indeed from his mistress. She was bubbling over with eager anticipation, and having dropped her missive right in the path she knew Malvolio was sure to come by, she called her fellow mischief-makers, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, and bade them hide behind a thick box-hedge, from where they might peep out and

view the sport. She hid herself there, too, and all three waited for the victim to fall into the trap.

Soon, by came Malvolio. He had been walking in the sun and thinking very pleasant thoughts, for he felt that he was quite an exceptional person, and undoubtedly superior to all the riff-raff with whom he came in contact, barring, of course, his mistress. She, too, was an exceptional person, and she recognized it in him. Maria had told him many times how much she affected him, and that should she fancy anyone it would be one of his complexion. Also she showed great respect to him, and trusted him. Malvolio let his chest spread out with pride. He began to think very wonderful things might happen. Then his eye caught the white letter lying in his path.

"What have we here?" said he, and stooped to pick it up.

And the two knights behind the hedge could hardly contain themselves for glee.

"By my life, this is my lady's hand! These be her very C's and P's and her T's, and thus makes she her great E's. It is out of question, her hand."

He turned round the envelope and then read: "To the unknown beloved — this, and my good wishes."

Malvolio certainly had no right to think that meant him, but after very little hesitation he decided to break the wax seal, and having done so, a further mystery tempted him on. He read:

"Jove knows I love:
    But who?
Lips, do not move.
No man must know."

"Ah! if this should be thee, Malvolio?" he continued out loud, much to his hearers' delight; and then again he read:

"I may command where I adore:

But silence, like a Lucrece knife,
With bloodless stroke my heart doth gore;
M, O, A, I, doth sway my life."

Malvolio stroked his little pointed beard.

"Let me see, let me see," he said meditatively. "'I may command where I adore' — why, she may command me!" he almost shouted, as the happy idea struck him. "I serve her — she is my lady." He looked again at the paper. "M, O, A, I. Now if I could make that resemble something in me."

He looked hard at the letters, while both knights peeped out quite incautiously to see how he was taking it; but Malvolio had no eyes or senses for anything but this magic document.

"M, O, A, I. Now, sure each one of those letters are in my name. Soft — here follows prose."

He turned the page, and here indeed Maria had let her pen run! He was to be fairly caught, if so be he could not read the mockery between the lines.

"If this fall into thy hand, revolve." Malvolio rubbed his chin and wondered just what that meant. The next sentence seemed clearer, "In my stars I am above thee; but be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them. Thy fates open their hands; let thy blood and spirit embrace them, and to inure thyself to what thou art like to be, cast thy humility and appear bold. Be opposite with a kinsman, surly with servants; let thy tongue tang arguments of state; put thyself into a trick of singularity. She thus advises thee that sighs for thee. Remember who commended thy yellow stockings and wished to see thee ever cross-gartered. I say, remember. Go to, thou art made if thou desirest to be so; if not, let me see thee a steward still, the fellow of servants, and not worthy to touch Fortune's fingers.

Farewell. She that would alter services with thee, the Fortunate-Unhappy."

Malvolio finished, and clasped the letter with a fine flourish to his heart.

"Daylight can discover no more!" He waved the letter on high. "This is open! I will be proud." He strutted round, to the great joy of the hidden knights. "To be Count Malvolio! I will read politic authors; I will baffle Sir Toby. After I am married I will send for him. I will extend my hand to him; I will say: 'Cousin Toby, my fortunes having cast me on your niece, give me this right of speech ' "

"What, what?" Sir Toby almost interrupted the rehearsal.

"You must amend your drunkenness," Malvolio went on, waving to the air.

Sir Toby nearly came out and knocked him down, but Maria held him back, and Malvolio went on:

"Beside, you waste your time with a foolish knight."

"That's me," whispered Sir Andrew, quite excited.

"One Sir Andrew," Malvolio continued.

Then he looked again at the precious letter, re-reading it carefully.

"No, I do not fool myself — my lady loves me! She did commend my yellow stockings of late, she did praise my being cross-gartered. I thank my stars I am happy! Here is yet a postscript." And he read:

"Thou canst not choose but know who I am. If thou entertainest my love, let it appear in thy smiling. Thy smile becomes thee well; therefore in my presence still smile, dear my sweet, I pr'ythee."

"Jove, I thank thee," cried poor Malvolio, thoroughly deluded. "I will smile, I will do everything that thou wilt have me."

And away he hurried to find his yellow stockings and to appear smiling before his mistress, while the three conspirators came out of their hiding and shook the air with their merriment, Maria promising again to send for them that they might see the result.

Chapter 5

Once again Viola stood in her page's costume before Olivia. She would obey once more Orsino's wish, and plead the cause none knew so well as she was quite hopeless.

Olivia had sent away her attendants, and asked the name of her visitor.

"Cesario is your servant's name, fair lady," answered Viola.

"My servant, sir! You are servant to the Count Orsino."

"And he is yours, madam. I come to ask your gentle thoughts on his behalf."

Olivia waved her hand impatiently.

"I bade you never speak again of him. But " — she looked at him very earnestly — "would you undertake another suit, I had rather hear you solicit that than music from the spheres."

Viola felt very uncomfortable and truly sorry for both Olivia and herself at this comical plight, that yet was so serious to Olivia. She dared not confess her secret, so the only thing was to kindly let Olivia see such love was hopeless.

"Dear lady – " she began.

But Olivia interrupted her to explain about the ring she had sent after Cesario.

"What might you think?"

"I pity you," answered the page, wishing she could escape.

"That's a degree to love," murmured Olivia softly.

"No, not a whit, for very oft we pity our enemies," said Cesario almost unkindly.

There was no mistaking it, even Olivia's love-blind eyes could see that the handsome young page had but one wish, and that was to be gone, and yet she kept him. In all her youth and beauty she rose up, and had he indeed been what he seemed, there is no doubt a real Cesario would have been at her feet, for she was not ashamed of her love.

"Cesario, by the roses of the spring,
By maidenhood, honour, truth and everything,
I love thee so that, maugre all thy pride.
Nor wit nor reason can my passion hide."

And the seeming page turned and faced her as squarely and truthfully.

"By innocence I swear, and by my youth,
I have one heart, one bosom. and one truth,
And that no woman has; nor never none
Shall mistress be of it, save I alone.
And so adieu, good madam; never more
Will I my master's tears to you deplore."

Bowing low, Viola turned to go; Olivia held out her hand imploringly, she could not bear to think that this was indeed to be farewell. "Yet come again," she said, "for thou mayest move that heart which now abhors, to like his love."

Viola turned and shook her head, then slowly passed over the sunny lawn, and out under the archway cut in the high yew-hedge. Sadly she went, and sadly looked Olivia after the beloved page.

"Disguise, I see thou art a wickedness," said Viola to herself. Indeed, the masquerading page had brought a good deal of unhappiness on another, as well as on herself. And she had not yet finished with all the trouble it was to bring her.

Olivia, calling all her pride to her aid, that none should remark upon her sadness, bade Maria tell Malvolio that she would speak with him.

"He's coming, madam," said Maria, trying not to smile; " but in very strange manner. He is sure possessed, madam."

"Why, what is the matter — does he rave?"

"No, madam, he does nothing but smile. Your ladyship were best to have some guard about you if he comes, for sure the man is tainted in his wits."

Maria sat down demurely to her work, but kept a corner of her eye open to watch the approaching Malvolio; also she noted with inward mirth the amazement on her lady's face as Malvolio, bowing and smiling, stood before her.

"How now, Malvolio? " Olivia asked a little sternly.

"Sweet lady, ho, ho!" Malvolio, clad in the gayest knee-breeches he possessed, and with the most screaming yellow stockings, cross-gartered up and down, came prancing forward, smiling from ear to ear, and kissing his hand. Olivia sat up very straight in her high-backed chair, in utter bewilderment at such conduct.

"Why, how dost thou, man? What is the matter with thee? "

Again bowing and scraping, Malvolio answered:

"It did come into his hands, and commands shall be executed. I think we do know the sweet Roman hand."

"God comfort thee!" cried his mistress. "Why dost thou smile and kiss thy hand so oft?"

"'Be not afraid of greatness': 'twas well writ," smiled back Malvolio.

"What meanest thou by that, Malvolio?"

"'Some are born great,' "quoted the steward, showing he had read well the wonderful letter.

"What sayest thou?" Olivia was getting quite anxious.

"'And some have greatness thrust upon them,'" he cried triumphantly.

"Heaven restore thee!" said his mistress.

"Remember who commended thy yellow stockings?"

"My yellow stockings!" exclaimed Olivia, while Maria bent over her work to hide her laughter.

"'And wished to see thee cross-gartered,'" went on Malvolio, looking at his legs. "'Go to, thou art made if thou desirest to be so; if not'" — and he came quite close to his lady — "'let me see thee a servant still!'"

Olivia jumped up.

"Why, this is very midsummer madness! Good Maria, let this fellow be looked to. Where's my cousin Toby? Let some of my people have a special care of him;" and leaving them, the lady Olivia walked quickly towards the house.

Sir Toby was nothing loath to give special care to his enemy, and while poor Malvolio thought his lady was treating him with honour, her kinsman, with Sir Andrew and Maria to help, had him securely locked in a small dark chamber, and assuring him he was mad, they left him there to think it over.

Chapter 6

Sir Toby and Sir Andrew had both been watching for the page who seemed so great a favourite with the lady; and Sir

Andrew had more than once overheard his silver-tongued compliments. "He's a rare courtier," he said jealously, for he had never a chance to say one word to the haughty lady.

Sir Toby, quickly scenting a joke, encouraged his friend's anger, and made him believe — for it was easy to gull the witless Sir Andrew — that Olivia encouraged the handsome page for no other reason than to make him, Sir Andrew, jealous. Then he pointed out to him that his only course was to have a duel with Cesario.

"Challenge the Count's youth to fight with him!" he cried, slapping the sword by his round side. "Hurt him in eleven places, my cousin shall take note of it; and assure thyself there is no love-broker in the world can more prevail in man's commendation with women than a report of valour."

So Sir Andrew was despatched to write a letter both curst and brief, eloquent and full of invitation, and Sir Toby undertook to deliver it; and fancying very truly that the slender-looking page might not be a great man with the sword, and knowing his friend to be but a bragging coward, he promised himself much fun in egging on the two to meet each other.

Viola, walking slowly and sadly away from the lady, was met by Sir Toby, whom she knew to be a kinsman of Olivia's. He accosted her, and to her dismay said that a very valiant knight, Sir Andrew Ague-cheek, was greatly incensed at such conduct and demanded to fight, then and there.

"You mistake, sir; I am sure no man hath any quarrel with me."

Viola looked back at the gateway she had left, and wished it were not beneath her manhood's dignity to cut and run.

That being impossible, she politely asked Sir Toby what offence had been committed, being quite willing to apologize. "I am no fighter," she said modestly.

"I only know," said wicked old Sir Toby, "that the knight is incensed against you, and he is indeed, sir, the most skilful, bloody, and fatal opposite that you could possibly have found in any part of Illyria. Will you walk towards him? I will make your peace with him if I can!" he added kindly.

Poor Viola, feeling as happy as though she were walking towards a den of lions, followed Sir Toby, and then sat down quaking, while he sought Sir Andrew, who just round the corner was nervously playing with his sword.

"Why, man, he's a very devil!" Sir Toby greeted him joyfully. "I had a pass with him; I have not met such a firago!"

"I'll not meddle with him," said Sir Andrew, sheathing his sword with more determination than he usually showed. "Plague on it! an I thought he had been valiant and so cunning in fence, I would never have challenged him. Make him let the matter slip, and I will give him my grey horse Capilet."

Sir Toby shrugged his fat old shoulders with contempt, but the joke was good.

"I'll make the motion. Stand here, make a good show on't; this shall end without the loss of souls. Marry, I'll ride your horse as well as I ride you," he added aside.

Then coming up to Viola he said:

"There's no remedy, sir; he will fight you for his oath's sake. But he hath thought better of the quarrel, that is scarce worth talking about! Therefore draw, for the supportance of his vow; he protests he will not hurt you."

Thus encouraged, Viola tremblingly drew her small sword from her belt.

"Pray God defend me!" she thought. "A little more would make me tell them how much I lack of a man."

Sir Toby, having now got the two combatants within sight of each other, both with drawn weapons, hurried to Sir Andrew and patted him on the back. "Come, Sir Andrew, there's no remedy; the gentleman will, for his honour's sake, have one bout with you, but he has promised me, as a gentleman and a soldier, he will not hurt you. Come on; to it."

"Pray God he keeps his oath," quacked Sir Andrew.

And Viola, advancing timidly, murmured:

"I do assure you 'tis against my will."

But the points of the swords of those two valiant duellists had scarcely touched, both backing more than they advanced, when a strange interruption occurred. A burly-looking stranger came suddenly round the corner, and starting to see Cesario engaged in a duel, knocked up both swords with his own, saying:

"Put up your sword. If this young gentleman have done offence, I take the fault on me. If you offend him, I, for him, defy you."

"You, sir! — why, what are you? " asked Sir Toby, angry that the fun was to be spoiled, while Viola, astonished, drew back, and Sir Andrew, nothing loath, sheathed his sword.

"One, sir," answered the stranger, "that for his love dares yet do more than you have heard him brag to you he will."

"On," cried Sir Toby, who was no coward, and was very apt with his sword. "I am for you." And he attacked the stranger; but they had barely crossed swords when two police-officers, following hard on the stranger's heels, ran in, and one of them laid a heavy hand on the stranger's shoulders, saying: "Antonio, I arrest thee at the suit of Count Orsino."

The stalwart stranger tried to shake off the hand.

"You do mistake, sir."

"No sir, no jot. I know you, though you have no sea-cap on your head."

Then, to Viola's astonishment, the stranger turned to her, saying:

"I must obey. This comes with seeking you, but there's no remedy for it. But what will you do, now my necessity makes me ask you for my purse? You stand amazed, but be of comfort."

"Come, sir, away," said the police-officer, pulling his arm.

"I must entreat of you some of that money," again said the stranger.

"What money, sir?" asked Viola, amazed. "For the fair kindness that you have show'd me here, out of my low ability I'll lend you something — my having is not much. Here's half my purse."

The stranger looked her up and down with scorn. "Will you deny me now? Do not tempt my misery, lest it make me upbraid you with those kindnesses that I have done you."

"I know of none; nor know I you by voice or any feature," said Viola, more and more puzzled.

"Come, sir — I pray you, go," and both police- officers took the stranger by the arms.

"Let me speak a little," burst out the stranger, boiling with indignation. "This youth that you see here I snatched one half out of the jaws of death, relieved him with love and devotion –"

"What's that to us? — "The time goes by — away," said the first officer.

"But oh! how vile has proved this man. Thou hast, Sebastian, done shame to thy good features, which I thought so full of worth."

Here the officers dragged him away, and looking back reproachfully at Viola, the poor man left the scene.

Viola had started with joy at one word in his abuse — that was " Sebastian." Could it be this angry stranger mistook her for her beloved brother? He said he had snatched him from the jaws of death, and she and her brother were so like that she seemed to see him in her glass, and specially was this so since she had been dressed like a page, and in the fashion he always wore. Here, indeed, might be a happy ending to her troubles. "Oh, prove true, that I, dear brother, be now taken for you."

Forgetting all else, she hurried away to the Duke's house; there she would get some inquiries made about this rough yet so kind stranger, as to why he was arrested by the Duke, and so to find the Sebastian of whom he spoke.

Now, the stranger, who had truly mistaken Viola for Sebastian, had good cause to feel injured. He was the captain of a small ship, and one day, some three months ago, while staying at his little house on the seashore, he had seen a strange object. At first he thought it only some wreckage; then he noticed what looked like a man tied to it. Quick as thought he plunged into the sea, and battling valiantly with the waves, he brought the mast to shore. There indeed was a youth, firmly lashed to it, but to all appearance he was dead. With great pains, however, the captain restored the poor boy to consciousness, and nursed him back to life with every kindness.

Sebastian, for it was he, had as winning a way with him as had his sister Viola, and the good sea-captain could not do enough to show him love and devotion. When he was quite recovered — and he had a long illness — Sebastian expressed a wish to go to the city of Illyria, some few hours' distance, to see if, perchance, he might find news of his sister, whom he thought was drowned, or of the captain in whose ship they had sailed. Sebastian's captain, Antonio, consented to go with him, but he

told him that having at one time fought against the Duke's ships, and done them some damage, he must not be seen in the city, or he would be imprisoned; he would therefore go to a quiet little inn and await him there. Giving Sebastian his purse, in case he fancied to buy any trifle, he left him to look alone at the city sights. He waited so long at the inn that he grew anxious about his dear companion, and sallied forth, when some sharp-eyed policeman noticed him, and followed him, coming on him, as we have seen, just when he was defending one whom he supposed to be his young friend Sebastian. No wonder his wrath rose at the seeming falseness of one he had loved and befriended, even as though he were his own son.

Chapter 7

Sebastian in the meantime had had his fill of adventures, strange ones in very sooth.

As he walked on the outskirts of the city, where a great wall enclosed a fine mansion, he was accosted by a Fool; who urged him to return to the lady he had just left. He thought the man was fooling, as was his wont; but presently out of the gate near by came two swaggering knights, and both attacked him rudely. Sir Andrew, finding the page none so valiant as he thought, had followed Sir Toby's advice to be after him again, but they met quite another fighter. Sebastian very naturally turned on them with his drawn sword, wondering if all the people of the town were mad, when again the gate opened, and a lovely lady ran forward, and, scolding the two knights roundly, she entreated his pardon for their rudeness, and asked him to return to her house.

As one in a dream Sebastian put up his sword, gazing at the lady as though he could never take his eyes off her. "If this be a dream, still let me sleep," he thought; and when Olivia, for it was

she, gently put her hand on his arm, saying, "Come, I prithee; would that thou wouldst be ruled by me," he could only answer, eagerly kissing the hand that rested on his arm, " Madam, I will."

Whereat the lady seemed much rejoiced, and led him into a beautiful garden. There he was served with refreshment, and still, as though in a dream, he heard this most sweet, most beauteous lady admit that she loved him, and she hung round his neck a finely wrought chain of gold, on which hung a miniature of her own most fair face.

What could this gallant young man do but kiss it with uttermost devotion, and respond with fervour to all the lady's tender sayings?

Indeed, whether he were dreaming or not, Sebastian felt that he had now encountered the lady to whom he could vow his life; and when she proposed that, if he were so minded, the priest should now unite them, for her own private chapel was in the grounds, he accepted the idea with joy. Olivia explained that this private marriage could be kept secret as long as he wished, but that it would enable her jealous soul to live at peace, and that hereafter the celebration should be held with the dignity befitting her state.

Sebastian answered: "I will go with you, and having sworn truth, ever will be true." And Olivia, gazing into those dark eyes she loved, or thought she loved, so well, was only too happy to believe him.

After the priest had blessed them, the lady seemed in no way astonished that he had to leave her; for he bethought him of Antonio waiting for him at the inn, and he also longed to tell him of this strange good-fortune; so, promising to return ere long, he left his newly found lady-love, and hurried off.

Meanwhile Viola had returned to the Duke, and explained her adventure to him, and together they went towards the Lady

Olivia's house in search of the man who had come to the rescue of Cesario. The police-officers quickly brought him before the Duke, who at once recognized him as one of those who had fought boldly against his ships; but when he called him "pirate" and "thief," and wondered he should dare come into his city, Antonio held himself proudly, answering:

"Orsino, noble sir, be pleased that I shake off those names you give me. Antonio never yet was thief or pirate, though, I confess, Orsino's enemy. A witchcraft drew me thither. That most ungrateful boy there by your side from the rude sea's enraged and foamy mouth did I redeem. For his sake did I expose myself to the dangers of this town. But his false cunning taught him to deny my acquaintance when I was in trouble, and refused me my purse which I had given for his use not half an hour before."

Cesario and the Duke looked at one another, and Cesario shook his head.

"When came he to the town?" asked the Duke.

"Today, my lord, and for three months we have never been parted," answered Antonio.

"Why, this is madness!" cried the Duke. "For three months this youth hath waited on me — but here comes the Countess," he cried suddenly with delight, as Olivia and her attendants came out of the garden gates. "Now heaven walks on earth!"

Olivia made him a sweeping curtsey, but turned to Cesario,

"You do not keep promise with me, Cesario."

She looked at him tenderly and reproachfully.

"Madam!" asked Cesario, full of wondering, and remembering the farewell in which he said he never more would come near her.

The Duke began: " Gracious Olivia "; but the lady entreated for no more compliments, and again turned with an endearing look to Cesario.

Then the Duke grew angry, and reproached her for her coldness; but seeing that her coldness turned to warm love when she looked at Cesario, he threatened to have him killed, even though he loved him, to spite his lady.

Viola, turning coldly from Olivia, answered the Duke "that to do thee pleasure most willingly would I die a thousand deaths."

Olivia, looking in vain in Cesario's eyes for the love she had so lately seen there, exclaimed: "Ah me, detested! how am I beguiled."

"Who does beguile you?" asked Viola. "Who does you wrong? "

"Is it so long? Hast thou forgotten?" cried Olivia pitifully, holding out her hands to the amazed page; and as the Duke took Viola by the arm and was walking away, she called: "Cesario, husband — stay! "

That brought the Duke to a sudden standstill.

"Husband!" he shouted.

"Ay, husband!" said Olivia, proudly and firmly. "Can he deny it?"

"Her husband, sirrah! " asked the Duke, turning on the page with fury.

"No, my lord, not I," said poor Viola, wondering what next would happen.

At that moment the priest walked out of the gate, and being appealed to by the lady, he confirmed her statement that but two hours ago he had married her to the Duke's page.

Then, indeed, the Duke was angry. He shook his arm free of Viola's hold, and said contemptuously: "Oh, thou dissembling cub! take her, and farewell, but direct thy feet where thou and I henceforth may never meet."

Poor Viola began to protest in vain, when all attention was turned to Sir Andrew, who rushed in, calling out loudly for a surgeon for Sir Toby, and he himself appeared to have a bleeding head. "Oh," he cried, pointing to Viola, "he has broken my crown, and has given Sir Toby a bloody coxcomb, too. For the love of God, your help! "

"But who has done this, Sir Andrew?" asked Olivia.

"The Count's gentleman, Cesario; he's a very devil." And Sir Andrew mopped up his bleeding forehead.

"Why do you say that?" cried Viola, beginning to feel all the world was mad. "You drew your sword on me without a cause, but I spoke you fair and hurt you not."

"Oh, oh!" groaned Sir Andrew; "if a bloody coxcomb be a hurt, you have hurt me, and Sir Toby, too. Ah, here comes Sir Toby."

Sir Toby, supported by a servant, and reeling, not quite so much from his wound as from his potations, brushed aside all inquiries. "That's all one: has hurt me, and there's an end on't. Where's the surgeon?"

The Duke, utterly amazed, first at his favourite's deceit, and now at this strange fighting with two knights, for which, truth to tell, he had scarce given his pretty page credit, was to have another and even greater surprise; for at that moment a young man, clad in green, with a plumed cap set on his dark curls, hurried towards the little crowd, and as Olivia bade her servants take away and attend to the two knights, he came towards her saying eagerly:

"I am sorry, madam, I have hurt your kinsman; but, indeed, had he been my brother, I could have done no less than defend myself. I see you look strangely at me, and I fear I have offended you. Pardon me, sweet, even for the vows we made each other but so late ago."

No words can describe the astonishment that could be seen on all faces. The Duke turned first to one seeming page, then to another. "One face, one voice, one habit, and two persons," he cried; while Antonio, pressing forward between the policemen, exclaimed: "Sebastian are you? "

Olivia, not knowing on which to gaze, cried: "Most wonderful!" while Viola and Sebastian faced each other spellbound.

It was Sebastian who first broke the strange silence.

"Do I stand there?" he asked, as though looking at himself in a mirror. "I never had a brother — I had a sister, whom the blind waves devoured. Of charity, what kin are you to me? what countryman, what name, what parentage?"

Viola — the happy Viola — understood it better, but playing for a little longer her part she answered demurely: "Of Messaline. Sebastian was my father. Such a Sebastian was my brother, too; so he went suited to his watery grave."

"Were you a woman," cried Sebastian, half wondering, half hoping, as he gazed into the face of the one so like himself, "I should let my tears fall on your face and say: 'Thrice welcome, drowned Viola.'"

And then Cesario — now again Viola — with her arms round her beloved brother's neck, confessed to the disguise she had assumed, and told him how she had served the Duke and — she turned blushing towards Olivia — and visited this lady!

Sebastian, still holding his recovered sister close to him, came towards Olivia.

"So it comes, lady, you have been mistook. Nor are you, by my life, deceived, for you are betrothed both to a maid and a man."

And Olivia, drawn to them both, gave her hand again to Sebastian, and folding Viola in her arms, murmured: "A sister! you are she."

Then it was the Duke's turn; he said he too must have share in this most happy wreck.

"Boy," he said, turning Viola towards him. "Thou hast said to me a thousand times thou never shouldst love woman like to me."

"And all those sayings will I over-swear, and all those swearings keep true," answered Viola, looking earnestly into his face.

"Give me your hand. Your master quits you. You shall from this time be your master's mistress."

So did all these turns and troubles meet with a most happy ending; and some days later in the little chapel in Olivia's gardens, with much pomp and circumstance, were celebrated two weddings, that of the Duke to Viola, and Sebastian to Olivia, and it would be difficult to tell which of the two couples was the happiest. But one thing is sure, no one felt or looked so important as the steward, Malvolio, in the full pomp of office, quite restored to his own and his lady's good graces; and certainly no one enjoyed the good things set forth for the wedding feast better than Sir Toby and his friend, Sir Andrew Ague- cheek.

A Midsummer Night's Dream

(Shakespeare)

Chapter 1

In the olden days, a few miles outside a beautiful town in Greece called Athens, there was to be found a wonderful wood. It was not only the grand trees, the lovely glades, the mossy banks covered also with sweet-scented flowers, that made this wood wonderful, but, and this was not known to everybody, it was the favourite haunt of fairies. Oberon the King, Titania the Queen, and all their delightful, strange, and sometimes mischievous little people, loved that wood; and by night, whether by moonlight or starlight, or in the blue-grey light before the sun rises, there, over the mossy banks, in and out of the sleeping flowers, under the quick-growing toadstools, these dear, bright little fairies flew and frolicked.

Mortals were generally fast asleep in their own beds while the fairies made merry; and even those who, for some cause or the other, found their way through the wood at night, had not always eyes open wide enough to see the fairies; also, if the fairies do not wish to be seen, they can always make themselves invisible.

But the fairies can see and hear the mortals, and it is of that our story tells us, one night of midsummer, long ago in the land of Greece.

It so happened that at this particular time Oberon, the Fairy King, was having a very desperate quarrel with his Queen, Titania.

She had taken a little Indian boy, whose mother she had known, to be her little page, and Oberon wanted him, and would not give her any peace because she would not give him up.

"The whole of Fairy-land," she said, "could not buy that boy of me."

Oberon thought to try to get the boy from her by foul means, since fair means would not answer.

So he called to his assistance Puck.

Now Puck was not one of those light, gossamer, rainbow-tinted fairies, more like a soap-bubble than anything else — only a soap-bubble shaped like a tiny mortal, of course — he was a sturdy little fellow, dressed in green and brown, and he wore a kind of hood with two rather large ears attached to it, which gave him a waggish look. He folded his little green wings so close to his back that you could hardly see he had any; but when he wanted to use them — flash! and away he was; no other fairy could fly so fast, and no steamer or aeroplane will ever be able to go with his swiftness. We mortals can hardly think so fast.

He was very useful to his lord, and when any joke or trick was needed Oberon always called for Puck.

So now he summoned him, and Puck, seated cross-legged on the ground before him, under the shelter of a huge oak, listened to his orders.

Oberon bade him fetch a little flower; it grew far away in a western land, and was called "love-in-idleness," and its juice had this magic quality — to make anyone on whose sleeping eyes it was laid love madly, and without any reason or sense, the first living creature they should behold on waking.

"Fetch me this herb," said Oberon, "and be thou here again ere the leviathan can swim a league!"

"I'll put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes," was Puck's answer; and with one sudden spring and a flash of little green gossamer wings he was gone.

Oberon smiled to himself as he thought how he would watch for Titania and play her this trick; then, before he took the spell from off her eyes, which he could do with another herb, she should give him up the boy he so desired.

As he sat, making a throne of the big trunk of the tree, he heard voices approaching — two mortals, a man and a maid, who were passing along the mossy path near by. Oberon wrapped round his glittering silver garments his invisible cloak, and waited to hear what was said.

By their dress — for the moon shone clearly, and flecked all the wood with silvery light — he knew these night wanderers to come from the city of Athens, and he soon heard how the man, with stern, unkind words, bade the maid cease from following him, for he could not and would not love her. He had come to the wood to find another maid called Hermia, and she, whose name was Helena, and who followed him even as a dog, was hateful to his sight.

The poor lady, weary with her long walk, still entreated to be allowed to follow, to love; for had he not at one time loved her and gained her affection? though now, in most cruel way, he cast her off, and sought only the love of Hermia.

Demetrius — for that was the name of this strange gentleman from Athens — threatened to do Helena a mischief if she still pursued him, and he went hastily down an overshadowed glade, the lady Helena following, and declaring she did not care if she died by the hand she loved so well.

As they disappeared beneath the trees Oberon unfolded his cloak and looked after them.

"Fare thee well, nymph: ere he do leave this grove, thou shalt fly him, and he shall seek thy love."

Then, with a little rustle through the leaves, Puck alighted on the ground before Oberon.

"Hast thou the flower?"

"Ay, there it is," said Puck.

"I pray thee give it me."

Oberon looked at the little purple blossom fondly. Ah, the magic, the mad magic of it! Well was it called "love-in-idleness," for the love it gave was not of the true sort that serves the beloved; it was just unreasoning desire.

Then Oberon sang, with the sweet bird-like trills of the fairy folk.

"I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows;
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine.
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine:
There sleeps Titania some time of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight.
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,
And make her full of hateful fantasies."

He broke off a little bit of the root Puck had brought him, and said:

"Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove:
A sweet Athenian lady is in love
With a disdainful youth: anoint his eyes;
But do it when the next thing he espies
May be the lady. Thou shalt know the man
By the Athenian garments he has on.
Effect it with some care, that he may prove
More fond of her than she upon his love:
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow."

Puck took the little flower and bowed low; then he sprang upwards.

"Fear not, my lord, your servant shall do so," and was gone.

Quickly Oberon flew to the place where Titania loved to rest, and there, indeed, Titania and her fairy attendants were assembled.

Titania reclined on the mossy bank. So dainty and small was she that she scarcely crushed the little blue violets on which she lay her golden head, with its crown of sparkling dewdrops. The sweet-smelling thyme bent over her, the woodbine screened the silvery moonlight from her face, but it touched into jeweled brightness the satiny blue of her gown, made from the same loom as the speedwell's delicate blossom.

Her fairies were round her, and at first sight you might have mistaken them for flowers. Roses, sweet-peas, the blossoms of peach and apple and wild-cherry, were all used to make their bright and light clothing; while the elves were usually clad in the darker greens of leaves, and sometimes they even used the skins of little wild animals whom they killed, when they found them doing some mischief to the plants and flowers they tended.

"Come, now a roundel and a fairy song," said Titania.

"Then, for the third part of a minute, hence;
Some to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds;
Some war with rere-mice for their leathern wings
To make my small elves coats; and some keep back
The clamorous owl, that nightly hoots and wonders
At our quaint spirits."

The fairies formed a ring round their Queen, dancing, over her and round her, flashing in and out of the moonbeams. Never was a prettier, lighter dance seen, for they had no need to keep, like mortal feet, tripping it only on the ground; the air to them was solid enough; the moonbeams could be climbed as easily as a ladder.

"Sing me now to sleep," said Titania drowsily; "and then to your offices and let me rest."

The leader of the singers began in a voice like a tiny silver whistle:

"You spotted snakes, with double tongue,
Thorny hedgehogs, be not seen;
Newts and blind-worms, do no wrong;
Come not near our fairy Queen."
And the chorus, like a chime of fairy bells, sang:
"Philomel, with melody
Sing in our sweet lullaby:
Lulla, lulla, lullaby; lulla, lulla, lullaby;
Never harm,
Nor spell, nor charm.
Come our lovely lady nigh:
So, good-night, with lullaby."

Titania's eyes closed, and her head sank back softly on the violets.

"Hence away," said the chief attendant fairy, "now all is well. One, aloof, stand sentinel."

A small elf in the dark green of the oak-leaves mounted guard, and when he saw Oberon fly down and bend gently over the Queen, he thought no harm, nor did he hear the soft whisper of his master's charm as he squeezed the flower-juice on Titania's eyes.

"What thou seest when thou dost wake,
Do it for thy true-love take;
Love and languish for his sake.
Be it ounce, or cat, or bear,
Pard, or boar with bristling hair,
In thy eye that shall appear

When thou wak'st, it is thy dear;
Wake, when some vile thing is near."

Waving his hand over his lovely sleeping Queen, away flew Oberon, full of delight at the mischief he was making.

Chapter 2

Puck obeyed his lord. In a shady corner of the wood he espied a man's figure sleeping soundly with his head on his arm — an Athenian, by his dress, Puck saw; and there near by, on some fallen leaves, also fast asleep, lay the lady of whom Oberon had spoken. This must be the couple, thought Puck. Churlish fellow, to try and run away from so pretty a lady! He bent over the man, and squeezed a little drop of the magic juice on each eyelid, feeling sure the first person he must see on waking would be the sleeping maiden. Then away he flew.

But Puck had made a mistake. This was not the same Athenian, nor the same lady who had followed him through the wood. This was quite a different pair of lovers, and you must hear about them.

Lysander was the name of the noble Athenian youth on whose eyes Puck had put the flower-juice. He was very deeply in love with the fair Hermia, who, with her green cloak wrapped around her long white robe, lay sleeping so quietly near by.

But her stern father forbade this marriage, though Hermia returned Lysander's love most warmly. He told her she was to wed Demetrius, and, like the fathers of those days, he commanded his daughter to obey him, whether she liked it or no. All that her pleadings, and all Lysander's — who was as noble and as rich as Demetrius — could urge, were of no avail; Hermia was to wed Demetrius, or he could, and he would, shut her up in a convent, and she should wed nobody.

Demetrius, who at one time had loved and wooed Hermia's friend Helena, now turned from her, and declared he would only marry Hermia, who did not love him, and thought he had treated her friend very badly.

But what were all these poor distracted young people to do against the stern decrees of the hard-hearted father, who had even appealed to the Duke of Athens, Theseus, to confirm his right to do as he liked with his own daughter?

Theseus, the Duke, was just about to celebrate his wedding with Hippolyta, the Queen of the Amazons, and his heart, being so full of love, might have held pity for lovers not so fortunate as himself; but he could not alter the law of Athens, and he therefore counselled Hermia to obey her father and marry where she did not love, and he gave her until the next new moon, in four days' time, when he would celebrate his marriage with Hippolyta, to think over the matter and prepare to wed Demetrius.

Lysander had another plan. He knew the course of true love never does run smooth, but he meant to steer his course, through all difficulties, to victory. Therefore he comforted Hermia and told her of his idea.

Seven leagues outside Athens, where its sharp laws did not hold sway, he had an aged aunt, rich and with no children, who loved him as her son. To her he would escape with Hermia, and there they would wed and live happily ever after. Hermia was to meet him secretly on the next night in the wood one league outside Athens, that wood where once he and she and Helena had gone on a May morning to greet the sun.

Hermia remembered the wood quite well, and promised to do as he wished.

To comfort her friend Helena, who so mourned the loss of her false lover Demetrius, Hermia told her of their plan of

escape, and that for good they would leave Athens, once so dear an abode to them. Perchance, thought Hermia, when she was gone Helena might regain the love of the fickle Demetrius. She had never given him anything but frowns and hate. So she wished her former playfellow farewell, and good-luck with her Demetrius.

Poor Helena! It might almost seem that the blinding magic of " love-in-idleness " had affected her eyes, even though Puck had squeezed none of its juice on her lids!

Though Demetrius scorned her and sighed only for Hermia, who would none of him, yet Helena, with no pride, sought his company, and now in her unhappiness she even thought to gain favour with him by betraying to him the flight from Athens of Hermia and Lysander. He at once decided to follow them that next night to their meeting-place in the wood, and Helena, poor silly soul, determined to follow him.

It was Demetrius, scolding Helena for continuing her pursuit of him, even at midnight, into the dark wood, that Oberon overheard; and Puck, charged by his lord to squeeze the plant's juice on his eyes, searching through the glades, found, not Demetrius; but Lysander fast asleep with the fair Hermia lying near by on a bank of leaves, and on to his unconscious eyes were the fatal drops poured.

In the dark shadows of the wood Demetrius had managed to escape from Helena, and she, wandering round, alone and frightened, came suddenly on the sleeping Lysander, and did not notice Hermia wrapped in her green cloak a little way off.

She thought at first that Lysander must be dead, so still he lay; and catching his arm, she shook it, saying:

"Lysander, if you live, good sir, awake."

Lysander started up, rubbed his eyes and gazed at the kneeling Helena. He looked again, and yet again. How fair she

was! how lovely was the pale gold of her hair encircling her sweet face! Tired she looked, and those blue eyes had still the thought of tears in them. Hermia was dark, her eyes, too — dark and sparkling, and she was shorter than Helena; how could he for one moment have thought of Hermia, when this tall, fair lady, Helena, stood before him?

He sprang to his feet:

"Awake! and run through fire I will for thy sweet sake!
Where is Demetrius? Oh, how fit a word
Is that vile name to perish on my sword."

Helena looked a little astonished at the warmth with which he spoke, and answered gently:

"Do not say so, Lysander — say not so; What though he love your Hermia? Lord, what though? Yet Hermia still loves you; then be content."

Lysander answered quickly: —

"Content with Hermia. No, I do repent
The tedious moments I with her have spent.
Not Hermia, but Helena now I love:
Who will not change a raven for a dove? "

So well did the magic juice do its work!

Helena looked at him aghast. What did this mean? Surely he was mocking her — he, who loved so dearly Hermia. Why should he spring up from sleep and address these wild, these wicked words to her?

Evidently he but mocked her; knowing Demetrius scorned her, he also chose this unkind way of showing his contempt. She turned away bitterly to leave him, but he followed her, protesting that indeed he loved but her, that Hermia was nothing to him. His eyes were open.

As they went, Hermia awoke. She called out to Lysander that she had had an evil dream — a serpent had stung her. But no Lysander answered; he was gone, and, in dismay, Hermia began to run through the wood, calling out his name.

Chapter 3

There were other mortals whom the shelter and seclusion of this wood had tempted out of Athens, to use it as a meeting place.

These too Puck encountered, and he nearly died of laughter when he overheard their talk, and listened to their plans.

A company of very humble folk had determined to give their Duke a treat on his wedding-day, and they had arranged amongst themselves that this treat was to be a play, and that, in order to keep it very secret, they should meet in the wood, and there rehearse their parts.

There was Quince the carpenter, Snug the joiner, Flute the bellows-mender, Snout the tinker, Starveling the tailor, and Bottom the weaver.

By the light of the moon, they all crept quietly out of Athens and arrived at the Duke's oak and began to arrange their parts.

The play on which they had fixed was a "most lamentable comedy " of Pyramus and Thisby — a sad tale in which, after but one meeting, and that through a chink in the wall, the lady arranges to meet her lover by moonlight at a tomb, but when Pyramus arrives at the spot he finds her torn mantle, and concludes that a wicked lion has slain his lady- love and left only her cloak uneaten. In deep grief he stabs himself with his sword. Then in comes Thisby, for she has run away from the lion, and seeing Pyramus dead, she also kills herself.

Bottom, who was a very forward character and liked hearing himself speak, was chosen as the "lovely gentleman-like man Pyramus "; but he would also have liked to do the lady and the wall, and when they talked of the lion, why then he was quite sure he would roar so that the Duke should cry, "Let him roar again."

"An you should do it too terrible, you would fright the Duchess and the ladies, that they would shriek — and that were enough to hang us all," said Quince, who was stage manager, and was trying to settle the parts.

So Snug the joiner was bidden to do the lion, and he was "to roar as gently as any sucking dove."

Flute was to act the part of Thisby, and speak in a monstrous little voice; another was to be the wall, easily arranged if he had a little plaster or rough-cast upon him, and mentioned the fact that he was a wall, and his fingers should make the chink through which the lovers whispered.

Then for the moon, in case the real one should not be shining, they considered that a man and a lantern, a bush and a dog, could not fail to be recognized as Moon! for he, too, could say that he was there as Moon.

They were getting on splendidly, with the greensward under the big oak as their stage, when Master Puck flew by.

"What hempen home-spun have we here,"he said to himself, "so near the cradle of the Fairy Queen?"

And when he found it was a play, he thought he could help to make that play even more amusing.

So after Bottom had spoken his first lines as Pyramus, and had gone off the stage behind a bush as Thisby came on. Puck had ready a big donkey's head, which he popped over Bottom's own rough hair, without his being aware that any trick had been played him.

As he came forward again to make love to Thisby through the wall's fingers, they all started with horror at the sight of him, and shrieking out that they were bewitched, they one and all rushed away through the wood, Puck after them, promising himself fine fun in leading them through bogs and briers, imitating noises of various beasts, to make them thoroughly terrified.

Bottom, in the meantime thought it was a silly joke of his comrades to frighten him, and sat down under the tree, beginning to sing to keep his spirits up, for he did not quite like being alone in the wood at night.

It happened that the other side of the tree was the bank on which slept Titania, and Bottom's very noisy and unmusical song awoke her.

The first thing she saw as she opened her eyes was this great clumsy figure, dressed in the rough working garments of a peasant, and on his shoulders rested a donkey's head, with big furry ears, that he shook from side to side as he sang.

But that is not the picture that Titania thought she saw or heard; the magic drops had changed her eyes, and, sitting up, she looked at this strange figure lovingly.

"What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?" she said, and as Bottom finished his song she called to him: "I pray thee, gentle mortal, sing again." And, coming in all her airy grace and beauty to him, she placed her tiny hand on his great donkey's head, and assured him she loved him, and could not let him leave the wood. Her fairies should wait on him, fetch him jewels, and sing to him. She called some of her attendants — Pease-blossom, Cobweb, Moth, and Mustard-seed — and these bright little people, dressed each in garments that looked like their names, bowed to their Queen's queer-looking new pet, and casting over him chains made of flowers' heads, they led him away to Titania's beautiful fairy bower. There she bade them get

him new nuts, and catch the bumble-bees, to bring for him their honey-bags. Sweet music was to sound and give him gentle sleep.

Bottom took to all this petting very kindly. He much wondered that his face was so hairy and his ears so long, but when Titania stroked him, and Pease-blossom and Mustard gently scratched his head, he laid himself down on the flowery bank and slept quite happily.

Oberon, who had been told by Puck how the magic worked, looked on this strange sight, and then asked Titania to give him up the boy he wanted, which Titania, so full of her new treasure, did at once, and Oberon hurried away with him.

Chapter 4

In flying through the wood Oberon asked Puck if he had managed to find the Athenian and put that little love affair straight.

"Oh yes," said Puck. He had dropped the juice on the man's eyes when his lady-love was sleeping near.

Just then by came Hermia, distractedly looking for Lysander, and Demetrius followed her, pleading with her to give him her love and think no more of Lysander.

Hermia answered him fiercely, charging him with slaying her true-love while he slept.

"No," said Demetrius, "I am not guilty of Lysander's blood, nor is he dead for aught that I can tell." And seeing that he could make no impression on Hermia, and being very tired, he let her wander on alone, and laid him down to rest.

Oberon was angry with Puck, this was not the Athenian he had meant, and reproached him for having anointed the wrong

man's eyes, and "some true-love turned, and not a false turned true."

So Oberon bade him quickly seek for Helena of Athens and bring her to the spot; he would himself place the magic juice on Demetrius' eyes, so should he see the right lady when he woke.

"I go, I go." cried Puck, "look how I go;
Swifter than arrow from the Tartar's bow."

Oberon had only just time to bend over Demetrius and put on his eyes the spell, when Puck was back, singing:

"Captain of our fairy band,
Helena is here at hand,
And the youth mistook by me
Pleading for a lover's fee.
Shall we their fond pageant see?
Lord! what fools these mortals be!"
"Stand aside," said Oberon, "the noise they make
Will cause Demetrius to awake."
"Then will two at once woo one," Puck laughed,
"That must needs be sport alone;
And those things do best please me
That befall preposterously."

So up on the bough of a tree sat the two fairies, and looked down, laughing at the discord of the mortals below.

Helena came through the woods followed still by the magic-blinded Lysander, who protested his love for her, and she, angry and tearful, told him he mocked her, for he was Hermia's lover.

"I had no judgment when to her I swore," said Lysander.

"Nor none, in my mind, now you give her o'er," answered Helena.

"Demetrius loves her, and he loves not you," he urged.

Then Demetrius awoke, saw Helena, and springing to his feet, cried out:

"O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!" and fell on his knees before her, praising her beauty and asking to kiss her white hand.

But she held it up in horror — he, too, was beginning to mock her! Did she not know well Demetrius hated her? Why had they plotted together to scorn her? Was it not bad enough that they should both love Hermia? Must they, also agree to make sport of poor Helena?

Lysander, not understanding this change in Demetrius, also reproached him and bade him seek Hermia, for he gave her up to him; he now loved Helena only.

But Demetrius protested that so did he, and all his love for Hermia had vanished.

The two men looked angrily at one another, when through the trees, by the flickering moonlight, they saw Hermia running towards them. Overjoyed was she to find again her beloved Lysander: why had he so unkindly left her?

Lysander thrust aside her hand that sought his.

"Why should he stay whom love doth press to go? " he asked, turning from her to Helena.

Hermia could not believe her eyes, her ears! Lysander, her lover, turn from her to Helena!

"You speak not as you think — it cannot be!" she cried.

Helena, seeing her distress, thought that she, too, was in the plot to mock her. Of course, both Demetrius and Lysander loved Hermia, and Hermia knew they did, and that they only pretended to love her; Hermia, therefore, was also only feigning distress. So thought and said poor Helena.

And that mischievous little Puck, sitting on the bough above them, held his little fat sides with laughter as he watched the trouble grow. For now the two friends, Hermia and Helena, began to misunderstand each other and to quarrel. Hermia accused Helena of stealing her lover from her, and Helena, at first softly, then more and more wrathfully, said she was mocked by them all, and Hermia, whom she had always loved, had turned against her. But she would leave them, she would get her back to Athens; the only wrong she had done Hermia was to tell Demetrius of her intended flight from Athens with Lysander.

And between the two men hot words also passed; they abused the angry little Hermia, and both sought to protect Helena from her sharp words and to soothe her grief. But this only made matters worse, and at last Demetrius challenged Lysander to come apart with him and fight; so they went off, and Hermia turned savagely on Helena.

"You, mistress, all this evil is 'long of you, nay, go not back."

But Helena would not stay; she answered:

> "I will not trust you, I,
> Nor longer stay in your curst company.
> Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray,
> My legs are longer though, to run away."

And away she ran, Hermia after her.

Oberon felt quite sorry for all this turmoil and quarrelling; he was a kind and gentle fairy, and since he had the boy he wanted, he would now make all matters run smoothly. He gave Puck some of the precious juice that would correct the bad effects of the "love-in-idleness," and which he now intended himself to apply to his Titania's eyes; and he ordered Puck, the mischievous, who had thoroughly enjoyed himself, to part the combatants by darkness, and lead them away from each other, by mimicking their voices, so that Lysander might think he was

following Demetrius through the sudden fog, and return the insulting shouts of "Coward!" and "Runaway!" made by Puck. This scheme answered well, and Demetrius and Lysander tore after Puck's voice, through brambles and pools, each one mistaking it for that of the other, and being led round and round in the darkness.

Wearied out at last, they both decided to rest and wait for the light, when they could find and fall on each other; and the cunning Puck led them both to the same spot, a splendid sheltering tree with soft moss and starry flowers, and there, quite unknowingly, they slept within a few yards of each other.

Then he turned his attention to the two poor maidens, who, frightened and angry, also wandered round in the mist. These, too, he led to that kind shelter, and Helena first, and then Hermia, dropped on a bank of moss, all of them near each other, and all worn out with the long night that had brought to each one so many strange experiences.

Puck, now that all slept, caused the dark fog to lift, and bending over Lysander, he squeezed the new flower-juice given him by Oberon on to his eyes, saying:

"On the ground
Sleep sound:
I'll apply
To your eye.
Gentle lover, remedy.
When thou wak'st
Thou tak'st
True delight
In the sight
Of thy former lady's eye.
And the country proverb known.
That every man should take his own:

Jack shall have Jill;
Nought shall go ill.
The man shall have his mare again
And all shall be well."

With this blessing Puck waved his hand over the sleeping mortals, and all the sorrow and weariness, hatred and fierceness, passed out of their spirits, and their faces showed calm and peaceful as those of little children; even their garments were restored from all the hard wear they had had, and looked new and clean.

So they slept until the dawn.

Oberon flew to Titania's bower: he might well feel rather ashamed that his spell had caused the lovely Fairy Queen to fall in love with the uncouth monster that poor Bottom looked with the donkey's head over his own. But he smiled to himself, thinking of the little Indian page-boy safe in charge of his own attendants. He would make such sweet love to Titania that she should forgive him; in fact, as she did not know of the part he had played, even thank him for curing her of this midsummer's madness.

So he pressed on her eyes the healing juice.

"Now, my Titania, wake you, my sweet Queen!"

Titania opened her flower-like eyes and sprang to Oberon's arms.

"My Oberon! what visions have I seen!
Methought I was enamoured of an donkey."

"There lies your love," answered Oberon, pointing to the sleeping Bottom, decked with flower-chains, and on whose great donkey's head perched Pease-blossom, daintily fanning him with butterfly's wings.

Titania shuddered.

"How came this thing to pass?" she asked. "O, how mine eyes do loathe his visage now!"

Oberon told the ready Puck to draw off the donkey's head, and with a wave of his wand caused Bottom, when he should awake, to hurry back to Athens, believing all these things to be but a dream.

Then dancing with Titania, as the fairies made soft music, he promised that the next night they should visit the Duke's palace at Athens, and bless all the couples there to be married.

As the first lark shot up in the sky, pouring out its clear and happy song, the fairies flew away, round the globe, "swifter than the wandering moon," for to them the sweet soft light of stars and night is more pleasant than the hot and glaring rays of the sun.

Chapter 5

In the beautiful city of Athens there was early stir. The Duke would take the noble Queen of the Amazons, his intended bride, and show her a hunt in his wood outside the city. The music of his hounds, he knew, would please her ears, for she loved sports even as he did.

So with the first rays of the sun a gallant cavalcade came trooping into the fresh greenness of the wood, now in the morning light looking like any other wood, for there was not a fairy left to be seen, only the rings where they had danced, the flowers they had tended, the creepers they had twined, and also the four sleeping mortals they had so deluded, though indeed it had been in the first instance only a kind intention on the part of the Fairy King to make one poor maiden happy.

The Duke and his company drew rein as they came on four sleeping figures.

"Soft, what nymphs are these?" he asked, looking at Hermia and Helena.

Hermia's father was with the Duke, and he recognized his daughter with surprise, then Helena, and the two youths. How came they here, and all together?

The Duke ordered his huntsmen to sound their horns, and the noisy blast, echoing through the wood, made the four sleepers spring to their feet and look round with astonishment. How came they here? what meant it all? had they been dreaming? Lysander was the first to collect his scattered wits, and kneeling before the Duke, he confessed to him the plan he and Hermia had made.

Then was Hermia's father very wrathful, and protested that by Athenian law he must lose his head, and that his daughter should marry the man he had chosen — Demetrius.

Then to his surprise Demetrius declared that now all his wish and longing had returned to his first love, Helena, for so truly had Oberon's second juice opened his eyes, that he, too, would evermore be true.

Thus they knelt, hand in hand, Demetrius with Helena, and Hermia with Lysander, the quarrels and fightings and anger of the past night seeming more and more dream-like, knowing only for sure that now they had each found their true-love, and all misunderstandings were past with the night.

Then was Theseus the Duke greatly rejoiced; he declared that they would all back to Athens and hold a marriage feast, the three couples being duly wedded with great solemnity.

And Hermia's father had to give way, whether he liked it or not, for they were now all against him; so he bowed to the Duke's will.

It was a very grand wedding, and never were happier couples; and in the evening, among all the feasting and dancing,

a company of players was introduced, the Master of the Revels explaining that these were hard-handed men that work in Athens, who had prepared this play to do honour to the Duke's wedding.

Theseus said they would see it, and our friend Bottom, thoroughly awakened from his most wonderful dream, as he believed it, of the donkey's head and of fairies, played the part of the lover Pyramus, and killed himself in gallant fashion; and the lion roared, after kindly assuring the ladies he was not really a lion, but only Snug the joiner; and the moon, the wall, and Lady Thisby all fulfilled their parts to the great delight of the laughing audience.

When all were peacefully asleep in the Palace, and the silver moon's rays made a path of light through the garden and the hall, in flew the fairies: first Puck, for

"he was sent with broom before
To sweep the dust behind the door;"

then followed Oberon and Titania and all their fairy train. And from room to room they tripped, light as birds, and with their soft song, that woke no one, but only gave most pleasant dreams, they blessed the happy couples; and when they flew off to their delightful wood, they left behind them the blessed gift of sweet peace.

The Tempest

(Shakespeare)

Chapter 1

In a peaceful blue sea lay a lovely little island. Palms and flowering trees were reflected in the calm waters that gently broke on the yellow sands, or rippled round caves in the rocks, where long crystals hung down, glittering like diamonds.

It was all as fair and strange as a dream, and one wondered what beautiful creatures could be worthy to live on so delightful an island.

At first it seemed as though it were deserted. There were pleasant woods, with nuts and berries and all sorts of wild flowers, but only the birds sang there; and the little wild animals, rabbits and deer and marmosets, scurried around; but no children played there. Little springs of clear fresh water bubbled up in the shady green, and little rivulets ran sparkling in the sunshine through grassy meadows, and the fish swam and jumped as though they never had heard of a hook.

Was no one there to enjoy this lovely island?

On a high part of the cliff, looking out over the smooth sunny sea, stood one tall figure. He was dressed in a long dark garment, rich of texture and cunningly wrought with gold. He smoothed his long grey beard thoughtfully as he gazed far out across the sea. Had we stood by his side we could not have seen what he did, for his keen sight was aided by magic powers, that carried his vision far beyond even the range of the telescope.

This grave elderly man was learned in all magic arts; he could summon the spirits from the sea, the air, and under the earth, and they came.

And now, as he looked over the smiling blue sea, he saw. In the far distance, a fleet of noble ships, and on the grandest and biggest he knew who travelled.

"Now," he thought, "now is the time for which I have waited; now my enemies shall be delivered into my hands. Now, you, O King, who so shamefully sold me; you, my brother, who so basely betrayed me; now I will summon you to this lonely isle — of which you have never heard — and here shall you learn the result of your wickedness. With pains must you learn; but my wisdom will not only punish." Then he raised his staff and called: " Come hither, servant! Come, Ariel! "

At his word, from out the air itself seemed to form a spirit, so light, so bright, so swift, he appeared to move like lightning, to come and go with the swiftness of the wind, to be made of nothing more solid than air. As he fluttered down like a bird on the grass by his master's side, he scarcely pressed the flowers and ferns growing there. His wings of gossamer quivered like those of a dragon-fly, and his little suit of shimmering green sparkled and dazzled like a humming-bird's breast.

Gravely the stately magician smiled to see him, and Ariel bowed low.

"All hail, great master! Grave sir, hail! I come in answer to thy call; I am ready to do thy bidding. Is it to dive into the fire, or to ride the clouds, or swim, or fly? What is thy pleasure?"

"My brave spirit," said Prospero — that was the magician's name — "this time, 'twixt six o'clock and now, must be spent by us both most preciously. Far out on the horizon sails a fleet — dost thou see the fine ships?"

Prospero waved his staff out over the blue sea; and Ariel, poising in the air, nodded, "Ay, sir."

"It comes from Carthage, does that grand fleet. Hither has the King of Naples taken his only daughter to wed her to the

King of Carthage. Now he and his gallant company are returning to fair Naples. But I have other ideas about his journey."

Ariel folded his wings and waited at his master's feet.

"Around those distant ships, thou Ariel, and all thy companions of the air whom I have given into thy command, must raise a most terrible tempest. A tempest of Jove's lightning and dreadful thunder-claps. Their roarings must stir up mighty Neptune's waves, lightning flames shall dance and quiver; such a tempest as shall make the most bold tremble."

Ariel fluttered up to look at the ships, then down to the grass again. "Yes, great sir. And then?"

"Listen, spirit. Thou shalt disperse the ships out towards the Mediterranean Sea, and let them in safety rejoin each other with no harm done; but one ship, the one whereon the King of Naples, his son, and his nobles are sailing, that must thou separate from the others, and to their view must that ship apparently go down amidst the dreadful waves, cracking and splitting, with all on board engulfed. But thou shalt contrive that the billows bear it on towards this island. Then, when nearing the shore, shalt thou cause such panic and such madness to seize the men, that, thinking the ship is cracking asunder, they shall plunge in the foaming sea. Thou and thy sprites shall uphold them, and bring them in safety to shore; but see to it that the King's son, Ferdinand, shall leap alone and land on a deserted beach, full of the idea that he has seen all the others go down into the deep. The King and his nobles lead to another part, and they shall believe Ferdinand has perished. Then cast a magic spell over the ship, that all the sailors may sink into a deep sleep; bid thy companions take the ship into a safe and secret cove, where they shall make all in perfect order. Dost thou understand?"

Ariel paused. "This is a big task, sir; but after it is accomplished wilt thou remember what thou hast promised me? Wilt thou then give me my liberty?"

Prospero looked down angrily; he liked to be obeyed quickly, and no words about it.

"How now?" he said; "thou dost forget from what a fate I rescued thee, ungrateful sprite!"

"Ah no, sir, I do not! " said Ariel, quaking in his shoes at his master's tone.

"Yes, thou dost. I must remind thee. When I came to this island I found thee groaning and moaning, a prisoner in a cloven pine-tree. There, for twelve long painful years, hadst thou been held. The wicked witch who had lived here with her monster son, Caliban, had been angered that thou, being of such delicate make, even of air, couldst not obey her horrid commands; and so she thrust thee in that split tree, and by her magic spells kept thee there. Then she died, and there was no one to deliver thee. Caliban was here alone, and he had not his mother's learning."

"I know, sir," murmured Ariel, who did not enjoy thinking of those evil days that were past.

Prospero looked at him severely. "Remember it well, then. I delivered thee from that cruel plight; but if again thou dost grumble at my tasks, I will rend an oak, and there thou shalt howl for twelve winters in his knotty heart."

"Pardon, master," cried Ariel, his wings all drooping and looking very meek, "I will indeed do all thy commands."

"Good! then in two days' time thou shalt have thy liberty. Go now; make thyself and thy companions like nymphs of the sea, make thyself nimble. Go hence with diligence."

Ariel gave a leap of joy, and was only too willing to fly and carry out all his master's commands. Like a bird he flashed over the sea, singing and whistling as he went, and from his high

mound Prospero saw the ocean being lashed into white-crested waves; the sky grew dark; the rolling of thunder was heard; lightning flashed, zig-zagging on the water; the wind howled; greater and blacker grew the tempest; and then, over the angry waves, driven in a fury of storm, a gallant barque came in sight.

To the poor fellows on board it seemed as though the whole world were cracking up in the fearful tempest, and yet on the island to which they were being driven all was calm and bright; and round them, only quite invisible, scurried Ariel and his companion sprites, thoroughly enjoying the hurly-burly they were creating; and at last, as one after the other of the distracted men on deck plunged into the stormy waves, they protected them from all harm, and brought them to shore as arranged, the Prince Ferdinand being drifted off by himself, and thinking that he alone of all the company had swam safely to shore.

"My brave spirit," said Prospero as he turned away from the sea that was now sinking into calm, like a child that has been swept by a passion of tears, and is again looking up to smile. He walked slowly from the grassy slope of the cliff, and went towards the sheltered ridge in which were many caves, arranged by him as sleeping-rooms and living-rooms, and one of which held his precious books and curious instruments that he needed for his magic arts.

Prospero did not live alone on his enchanted island; besides Ariel and other spirits and the monster Caliban, he had with him his daughter Miranda, and she was as fair and beautiful a maiden as any father could wish to see. As he approached the caves she hurried to meet him; her face was pale and her eyes wet.

"Alas! my dear father, if you have raised this terrible tempest, oh! let it now cease. I watched the ship fight in that black sea; I heard the cry of the poor sailors, and I wept with them. I fear they are all drowned. Had I but had the power, surely I would have saved those poor souls."

"No harm is done, my dear daughter," Prospero answered soothingly. "Dry your eyes — all are saved. What I did, I did in my love and care for you. It is time you should know the story of how you came to this island, you and your father; and who your father is, other than poor Prospero. Help me to lay aside my magic garment, and sit here and give me your attention."

Miranda took off her father's long cloak with its curious workmanship of golden figures, and she sat beside him on the grassy bank, waiting breathlessly for the story that she had never liked to press him to tell her.

"Do you remember any other home, my child, before you found yourself living on this island? " Prospero asked her.

"Indeed, yes, though it seems like a dream. Had I not maids who dressed and cared for me?"

"Certainly you had. How strange you should remember that and not how you came here. Do you remember nothing more?"

"No, I have forgotten all."

"Well, you were but three years old, and it is twelve long years ago. Then, my Miranda, your father was the Duke of Milan, a prince of power."

Miranda started. "But are not you my father?"

Prospero patted her hand. "Surely — and yet your father was the Duke of Milan and his only child a Princess."

"Oh, what foul play was there, that we came here from Milan — how was it?"

"Indeed, my child," said Prospero very sadly, "it was foul play. Listen well. I had a brother and you an uncle, called Antonio. To think a brother could be so false! I loved and trusted him, and while I studied deeply in my learned books, and gave my attention to all arts for which I was renowned, I left to him the management of my states. But he, like the ivy which

covers and sucks from the stately oak its very life, so he drew my dignity to himself, used his power — that I gave him — to turn my people's hearts to him. He played the Duke, I being so buried in my studies, until at last he felt he would like in truth to be the Duke. So for that wicked purpose he made a plot with the King of Naples that he would give him tribute and do him homage, did he assist him to drive me forth — to kill me."

"Alas, alas!" cried Miranda, "to think two brothers could be so different."

Her father, sitting straight and stern as he recalled all the wicked doings, continued: "One night a treacherous army, helped by Naples, came to fair Milan. Antonio opened the gates, and in the dead darkness they seized me, and your poor crying self, and hurried us away."

"Ah me!" said Miranda. "I could cry again to think of that dark night. But why did they not destroy us?"

"You may well ask, my child. But, dear, they did not dare, for my people loved me. They pretended no ill was meant, and placed us on a fine ship. But, some miles out to sea they had prepared a rotten boat, no rigging, no tackle, no sail, nor mast — the very rats had left so poor a shelter. Here they put us — you and me — to cry to the sea that roared, to sigh to the winds, who, sighing back, drove us out and away."

"Oh, poor father! what a trouble I must have been to you! " said Miranda, leaning her head against his shoulder.

"Ah no! you were an angel to comfort me! You smiled as though all would be well, when I was like to add my salt tears to the salt sea."

"But how came we to this island?"

"God helped us. We had some food in the wretched boat, and some fresh water; for one noble of Naples, Gonzalo, had pity on us. He had been told to carry out this wicked plot and it

grieved his heart. So he placed many things in the boat, food and rich clothing, stuffs and necessaries. Also, knowing how I loved my books, he had taken many from my own library and stowed them in the boat."

"I would like to thank that man," said Miranda softly.

Prospero rose, and again drew on his dark magician's robe. "Sit still here, my child, and but one word more of our sea-sorrow. The wind brought us to this isle, and here have I cared for you, and taught you more than is often known by Princesses."

"I thank you for it, my father. But I pray one more question. Why did you with your wondrous power raise this storm?"

"This much can I tell you. A most strange fortune has brought to this island my enemies. For me now rises a prosperous star. But I must not let this time slip by me. The opportunity will not come again. Now sleep, Miranda " — as he spoke, Prospero waved his staff — "it is a good sleep, and I know you cannot help it."

Miranda's head sank back on the grassy bank, her eyes closed. Her father smiled down on her; his mind was full of plans, and to see his daughter happy, and again in her rightful position, was the thing for which he worked. Then he waved his staff.

"Ho! Ariel, my sprite," he called, and Ariel stood beside him. " 'Twas bravely done. Hast thou landed all in safety?"

"All, my master — and as thou commandest, none have suffered hurt. Not a hair perished, on their garments not a stain, but fresher even than they were before."

"And where is Ferdinand?"

"Close by, my master. I have landed him by himself, and in a rocky corner he sits, filling the air with sighs."

"Go, then, and with music draw him hither. But be thyself invisible!"

"My lord, it shall be done." And away Ariel flew.

Then Prospero turned to a cavern at a little distance, and, in a voice hard and stern, shouted: "What ho, slave! Caliban, come forth!"

The answer was a growl, and then: "There's wood enough within."

Prospero called again: " Come forth, thou tortoise! Come forth, I say!"

Growling and grunting, and cursing below his breath, a great unwieldy monster shuffled into the open air. His body was big and heavy, and his arms short and terribly strong. His nails were like claws, and the little eyes in his great face looked as though they could burn with hatred. A shaggy mop of black hair hung down rough and unkempt, and a coarse brown garment with leathern belt and straps covered him.

"May the wind blow and cover thee with blisters!" was his greeting to his master.

"For that thou shalt be pinched tonight, and bees shall sting thee, wicked monster," said Prospero sternly.

"I must eat my dinner in peace," growled Caliban. "This island is mine; my mother, the witch, left it to me! When first thou earnest, thou didst treat me kindly, gave me good things to eat, and told me of the great big light and the little lights, and then I loved thee, and showed thee all the best places in the island, for water, for berries, for fruits. Now thou dost keep me to this cave, and will not let me roam about my island, and I hate thee, and wish all toads and beetles and bats that obeyed my mother may plague thee."

"Thou wicked slave! I did indeed treat thee kindly, and taught thee speech; but thou wouldst learn nothing good, and

when thou in malice soughtest to harm my child, richly thou deservest that I should hold thee prisoner, and give thee no liberty for wickedness."

"Eh, thou taughtest me to speak, and now I can curse thee," growled Caliban.

"Go; fetch fuel," Prospero ordered. "Do thy work well and willingly, or I will rack thee with old cramps and make thy bones ache, that thou shalt frighten the beasts with thy roars."

"No, no, I pray thee!" said Caliban, really frightened at such a prospect, and he went away grumbling to himself: "I must obey; he has such power. Even my witch mother would have had to obey his powerful arts."

Ariel in the meantime had flown over the island to the part of the beach where Ferdinand had swam to shore, and where, sad and sorrowful, he bemoaned the cruel fate that had cast him on an unknown island, and drowned his father and friends in the stormy sea.

Ariel thoroughly enjoyed the task that Prospero had given him. He and his airy companions had scattered the wrecked party in different parts of the island, and had then blown the ship, with the sailors sleeping a magic sleep, safely into a well-sheltered cove. Now he was to make merry tormenting and confusing the wanderers. Himself invisible, he was to make strange music, sing songs, talk out of the air to them of their past wickedness, and fill them with dismay. But Ferdinand was innocent of any knowledge of the base part his father had played in causing Duke Prospero's banishment and apparent death; he was to be dealt with quite differently, for Prospero had other plans for him. So as he sat sadly thinking of the result of the fearful tempest, the air was suddenly filled with music, and a sense of wings flying all about, though nothing could he see. Then a sweet voice sang, clear as a silver bell, accompanied by the notes of a harp that fell like water:

"Come unto these yellow sands,
And take hands:
Courtsied when you have, and kissed
The wild waves whist.
Foot it featly here and there;
And, sweet sprites, the burden bear.
Hark, hark!"

So sang Ariel, and then his laughing companions all joined in with "Bow-wow."

Ariel sang again, "The watch-dogs bark!" and again the others joined in, "Bow-wow."

"Hark, Hark! I hear
The strain of strutting chanteclere
Cry, Cock-a-diddle-dow."

Then Ariel and his friends with a ripple of laughter seemed to fly away.

Ferdinand arose, and walked wonderingly after the sound. "Where should this music be? In the air, or on the earth. Now it has ceased. Surely there must be fairies on this island. I seemed to hear it on the waters, and it soothed both them and me; and I felt drawn to follow it. Now I hear it again. I must find who it is that sings."

Ariel, still invisible, came close in front of him, and, in a low, mournful voice, sang:

"Full fathom five thy father lies.

Of his bones are coral made;
These are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade.
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.

Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell.

and lowly and slowly all round the bewildered Ferdinand the air-sprites sang after Ariel:

" Ding-dong, ding-dong, bell."

Now near, now far, the strange bell-like voices moved along the path that led up from the shore, through a little wood, towards the place where Prospero and Miranda had made their home out of the caves. Ferdinand followed the singing, wondering that it should seem to tell of his drowned father, and feeling more and more certain that it could be no mortal sound.

And so Ariel led him right through the wood, and up to the grassy mound where Prospero and Miranda were sitting. As he came in sight, Prospero woke Miranda from her gentle spell of sleep, and asked her what she saw.

Miranda, who could not remember any of the people at her father's Court when she was a baby, and who, since then, had only seen her father and the monster Caliban, besides Ariel and his fellow sprites, turned very admiring eyes on the advancing stranger, so young and noble-looking.

"What is it, sir?" she asked. "Surely a spirit! And how he looks about! He has a brave form."

Prospero laughed. "No, child, that is no spirit; he eats and sleeps as we do. He was one of those you saw in the wrecked ship, and, if he were not sad and downcast, you might call him a good-looking fellow. He is searching for his companions."

"Oh! " said Miranda, "I call him a thing divine. I never saw mortal look so noble."

Prospero was delighted to hear Miranda's praise; this all worked in well with his plan, and he whispered to Ariel, whom he could see, though no one else could:

"Well done, fine sprite! You will soon have your freedom."

Ferdinand, as he drew nearer, raised his sad eyes, and then he saw Miranda, that fair and lovely girl; and small wonder was it that, thinking the place to be full of magic, he should take her for a spirit, the Queen of all in the wonderful and beautiful island. In her long gown of white, with a golden band holding the folds gracefully round her slender waist, and a wreath of wild roses in her fair hair, she looked like some vision of spring — some dream of eternal youth.

So full were his eyes of Miranda that he never even noticed the dark, tall figure of her father standing near. He advanced with a low bow, and spoke softly, wondering if his Italian tongue would be understood by this radiant vision.

"Surely this must be the Queen on whom the magic music waits! " he said. "Oh, tell me, wonderful lady, do you live on this island? Are you a mortal maid or a spirit?"

Miranda was blushing as pink as the roses in her hair.

"No spirit I, sir, and certainly a mortal maid."

Ferdinand clapped his hands with joy.

"My language! She speaks my language! And I, alas! am the best that is left of those who came from my beloved Italy!"

Prospero stepped forward at this and spoke sternly:

"How now, sir? The best? What would the King of Naples say did he hear you? "

"I wonder to hear you speak of Naples," said Ferdinand, in fresh amazement. "But alas for it! I myself am Naples' King. My father, sir, was drowned in that terrible tempest."

"Alack! alack! " cried Miranda, full of sympathy.

Ferdinand looked on her with gratitude.

"Alas! yes; and all his lords, the Duke of Milan and his brave son among them."

"Ho, ho!" said Prospero to himself. "The Duke of Milan and his brave daughter could tell a different story."

And then he noticed how devoutly Ferdinand turned to Miranda, how his eyes could not leave her blushing face, and how she, half trembling, half happy, gave him sympathy for the storm and loss which he described to her.

"So; that goes well," he said to himself — "just as I would have it. But not too fast, young sir, not too fast."

For that the evil which had been done to him should be repaid by his daughter's happiness was now his wish, and that Naples' son should wed his daughter seemed to him a fine ending to all their trouble. But "too light winning makes the prize light," he thought. He therefore listened gravely as Ferdinand, taking Miranda's hand in his, and respectfully bowing to kiss it, said:

"Fair lady, if only I can be fortunate enough to win your love, I will make you Queen of Naples."

Miranda's eyes made words quite unnecessary; they said very plainly: "It will not be difficult for you to win my love."

But her father interrupted roughly: "Listen to me, young man: you call yourself King of Naples in sooth, and that I know you are not." He knew, of course, that Ferdinand's father was not dead, but had also been brought safely to shore. "No, I have a mind that you are a spy," he went on, "and have come to this island to win it from me — its lord."

Ferdinand started with horror.

"No, as I am a man!"

Miranda grew pale and troubled.

"Why does my father speak like that?" she wondered. "In so fair a house only good things can dwell;" but she dared say nothing.

Prospero continued, still with seeming anger: "I know you — you are a traitor, and I will keep you prisoner; give you sea-water to drink, and old roots and acorns shall be your food. Follow me."

"Not I," said Ferdinand, now angry too. "Not while I can fight; " and he drew his sword.

Prospero merely raised his staff, and the young Prince could not move.

Miranda, knowing her father's magic powers, gently seized his arm.

"Oh, my dear father, do not try him so sorely; he is gentle, not fearful. I will be surety for him."

"You plead for a traitor! See, he dare not strike; he knows his guilt," mocked Prospero.

"Nay, my dear father, have pity on him."

Then Prospero feigned to be angry with Miranda.

"Oh, you think this a fine Prince. Why, you have never seen any man. He is fine beside Caliban, but to most men he is a mere Caliban! "

Miranda shook her head.

"I never wish to see a goodlier man."

"Come," said Prospero; "come to this cave. You cannot refuse to obey; you are weak as a child."

"So I feel," said poor Ferdinand, dismayed. "It must be all my troubles — the wreck, my father's loss, not this man's threats that so disturb me. In my prison, however, if but once a day I may behold this sweet lady, then contented I go to prison."

He turned once more to look at Miranda, and she quickly at his side whispered:

"Take comfort; my father is of better nature than now appears."

Prospero, however, marched off the Prince and locked him up for the time; and Miranda went into her own cave, fitted up as a pretty sitting-room, with her work and her music lying about, and throwing herself on a couch covered with a fine silk rug, she sighed and sighed; then wept, then smiled. The coming of this noble Prince had brought her tears, so she wept; but his coming had brought her love, and so she smiled.

As for her father, she knew him to be good and kind, and also wise; so she wondered what he had in his mind. He had raised the tempest, but had saved all the men on board; he had locked up the gallant Prince with threats and anger; but she wondered what he really meant to do. She could only wait and see.

And also, being a girl of some wisdom, she resolved to see the Prince whenever she found an opportunity. He had said that would cheer any prison. She would certainly give him that cheer.

Now, while things were going at first sight very badly with Prince Ferdinand, in another part of the island there was much grief over his apparent death in the tempestuous sea.

Chapter 2

In a sunny, sheltered little bay, Alonso, the King of Naples, and his lords, had been safely brought to land by Ariel and his companions. Among the nobles seated round the King on a grassy bank was his own brother Sebastian, and the wicked brother of Prospero, Antonio. Also the good old Gonzalo, who had been so kind a friend to Prospero in his deep need, and had seen that necessary comforts and his beloved books had been placed in the poor little boat that had drifted across the sea to the unknown island, where they were now all assembled.

King Alonso was mourning for his son, his only son, whom he had seen, or thought he had seen, swallowed up in a mighty wave, and no one could comfort him.

Gonzalo reminded him that their own escape had been most wonderful. Then, how delicious and fresh was the air; and the grass, how green and lusty it looks. And he pointed to their clothes, which were quite unstained with the salt water.

"Methinks our garments are now as fresh as when we put them fresh in Afric, at the marriage of the King's fair daughter Claribel to the King of Tunis."

"A sweet marriage," said Sebastian bitterly, " and we prosper well in our return."

Alonso raised his bowed head from his hands.

"Would I had never married my daughter so far from Italy! I shall never see her again, and coming home my son is lost. Alas! what strange fish hath made his meal on thee, my heir of Naples?"

Then one of the lords, Francesco, tried to comfort him.

"Sir, he may live; I saw him beat the waves under him, and ride upon their backs. He trod the water, and kept his bold head above the waves; and his good arms, like oars, in lusty strokes brought him, I doubt not, alive to land."

But Alonso shook his head. "No, no; he is gone."

Sebastian, who did not care very much if his nephew were drowned — for his death made him the next heir to the throne of Naples — shrugged his shoulders.

"Sir, you may thank yourself for this great loss. You would not let your daughter wed in Europe, but must take her to Africa, where she is banished from your eye."

"Prithee, peace," said poor Alonso, who knew quite well that this was true, and did not care to hear it.

But Sebastian went on: "We all did kneel to you and beseech you, and so did the fair girl herself, but you would have it so. And now you have lost your son, and many in Milan and Naples are made widows by all the men we have lost. The fault is your own."

"So is the dearest of the loss," said Alonso, looking up sadly.

"My lord Sebastian," cried good old Gonzalo rebukingly. "The truth you speak doth lack some gentleness. You rub the sore when you should bring the plaster."

While they were talking, Ariel flew lightly to that place, and though no one could see him they all began to hear strange and solemn music. It had the effect on most of them of an overpowering need to sleep, and one by one they sank back on the soft grass and peacefully slept. All but Alonso, Sebastian, and Antonio. Alonso looked around astonished.

"What! all so soon asleep! I wish mine eyes, would with themselves shut up my thoughts. They are inclined to do so," he added, folding himself in his cloak and leaning back on his arm.

Sebastian and Antonio urged him to sleep, and promised to guard him while he rested.

But Sebastian was made of the same base stuff as Antonio, who, we know, had supplanted his brother Prospero and caused his death, as far as he knew.

Now his busy brain, in no way afflicted by the music that had sent the others to sleep, was plotting again, and thinking what advantage he could get out of the present distress.

There lay Naples' King asleep, and except for his wicked self and that King's brother, unguarded.

And the King's brother might be King, even as he had become Duke, if only he had the same mind, and would use the same kinds of methods.

So, craftily, he began to talk to the weak Sebastian, and tell him " there might be one could rule in Naples as well as he that sleeps"; and he pointed to Alonso, sunk in profound slumber, and to Gonzalo, the good old lord, snoring away peacefully.

"Say this were death that now had seized them! Why, they were no worse than now they are. Oh, that you bore the mind that I do!" he went on, pressing Sebastian's arm, and gently touching the jewelled dagger that hung by his side. "What a sleep were this for your advancement! Do you understand me?"

"Methinks I do," answered Sebastian hesitatingly.

"And how does the idea of your good-fortune content you?"

Sebastian looked at Antonio doubtfully. " I remember you did supplant your brother Prospero."

"True," said Antonio, as if that were nothing to be ashamed of; "and look how well my garments sit upon me! My brother's servants were then my fellows, now they are my men!"

"But for your conscience" began Sebastian; and Antonio answered him with a laugh:

"Ah, sir — where lies that! I feel not that deity within my bosom. Twenty consciences could not stand between me and Milan. There lies your brother, no better than the earth he lies upon; if he were that which now he is like, that's dead! I, with this obedient steel, three inches of it" — and he drew his own dagger and showed the sharp point — "can lay him to bed for ever, while you can do the same to that ancient morsel, Sir Prudence;" and he pointed to the sleeping Gonzalo. "He might upbraid us, but for the rest" — he looked at the other sleeping lords — "they will follow where we lead."

Sebastian took a deep breath. It all seemed so easy, so simple, and then he would be King, King! He looked with admiration at Antonio: how well he did without a conscience!

"I will do as you did, dear friend. As you got Milan, so will I come by Naples. Draw your sword, one stroke, and you shall be free from the tribute that you pay to Naples, and I, the King, will love you."

Antonio clapped him on the shoulder.

"Draw together, and when I raise my hand, you do the like, and fall on Gonzalo."

If it had not been for the invisible Ariel, this wicked plot might have been carried out; but he, sent by Prospero, who knew in his own magic ways what was happening in that distant part of the island, suddenly swooped down, and sang in Gonzalo's ear:

"While you do snoring lie,
Open-eyed conspiracy
    His time doth take.
If of life you keep a care,
Shake off slumber and beware:
    Awake! Awake! "

Old Gonzalo, starting up as out of a nightmare, shouted: "Now, good angels, preserve the King! " and violently shook him by the arm. Alonso, thus awakened from his deep sleep, looked up in astonishment at the two conspirators, who, with drawn swords, were standing at his side.

"Why! how now — ho, awake? Why are you drawn? Wherefore this ghastly looking? "

Sebastian and Antonio stared dismayed at each other, and then in a kind of bewilderment sheathed their swords.

"Sir," said Sebastian, recovering his wits and ready with a lie, "while we stood here guarding your sleep, we heard a hollow burst of bellowing, like bulls, or rather, lions. Did it not wake you? It struck my ears most terribly."

"No," said Alonso, "I heard nothing."

Antonio then spoke eagerly: "Oh, it was a din to fright a monster's ear, to make an earthquake. Sure, it was the roar of a whole herd of lions."

Alonso turned to Gonzalo: "Did you hear this, Gonzalo? "

Gonzalo seemed extremely puzzled; he tried to remember what had woke him so suddenly, but he could not remember Ariel's warning song.

"Upon my honour, sir," he answered, "I heard a humming, and a strange one, too, which did awake me. I shaked you, sir, and cried. As my eyes opened I saw their weapons drawn. There was a noise, that's true. It is best we stand upon our guard, or that we quit this place. Let us draw our weapons."

Everyone was now fully awakened; they looked at one another; some said they had heard a noise, others had noticed nothing, and Sebastian and Antonio, finding how well they had got out of a difficult corner, continued to explain what dreadful bellowings and roarings had made them spring up and draw their swords to defend the King.

They all agreed this island on which they were cast adrift must certainly be haunted.

"Well," said Alonso, "let us leave this place. Lead off, Gonzalo, and we will make further search for my poor son."

"Heaven keep him from these beasts," prayed Gonzalo, as, sword in hand, he prepared to go through the little wood that lay at the back of their grassy shelter; "for surely he is somewhere on this island."

And so they all followed him; the two conspirators walking last, whispering to each other that they must wait now for the next opportunity.

Ariel, very pleased at having preserved the King and thoroughly confused everybody, flew off to report to Prospero, and get his further instructions.

Chapter 3

Now, though most of the sailors and servants on the King's ship had been thrown into a deep slumber by Ariel and his companions, and were lying in their berths in safe shelter, yet a few had cast themselves into the sea when the ship appeared to be breaking up, and so had come to shore. One of these was the butler Stephano, and he was a very drunken fellow, whether at sea or on land; and even the peril of the storm had not made him forget his beloved liquor. So when he tumbled himself into the sea, half drunk even then, he clung with all his might to a barrel of sack — a very pleasant wine much drunk in those days — and Ariel's sprites, laughing over his efforts to save himself and his drink, helped him astride the barrel, and brought him to a convenient cave in the shore, where he stowed his treasure, and then, making a bottle of bark to carry with him, he went forth to investigate the island.

Another queer fellow who also swam safely to that same part of the island was Trincolo, and he was the King's jester. As was his duty, he tried to take things, even the most unpleasant, in a merry mood; but though he was very glad to find himself walking on solid ground and in a very beautiful country, and glad, too, that his clothes had not suffered in the water, one yellow leg as bright as ever, and the other blue one as blue as when new, and his jester's bauble rattling away, yet he longed for someone to speak to, and, as he looked at the still threatening clouds, for some shelter to hide in.

Now, as he walked, he chanced to come across Caliban, who was carrying logs from a wood where he had been chopping. He

grumbled and cursed as he worked, even though he knew Prospero's sprites would hear his bad language and punish him for it.

So when he saw a strange being, in strange clothes, and carrying a strange bright-coloured toy that rattled, he at once made up his mind it must be a sprite sent to plague him for bringing wood so slowly, and he promptly laid down on the ground, saying to himself: "I'll fall down flat. Perchance he will not mind me."

Trincolo, however, ran right up against him, and looked down, astonished, at a great brown form with no face — for Caliban was lying on his front shaggy hair at one end, and very misshapen feet and hands sticking out of the brown mass.

"What have we here? A man or a fish? Dead or alive? He smells like a fish, a very ancient and fish-like smell. He is legged like a man, and his fins like arms."

Then he stooped and touched one of these arms. "Warm, by my troth; this is no fish, but an islander that hath lately suffered by a thunderbolt."

As he spoke of thunder, there came a heavy clap, and some big drops of rain splashed down. "Alas! the storm is coming again; where shall I hide my head? yonder cloud cannot choose but fall by pailfuls. I will creep under this monster's gaberdine; there is no other shelter hereabout. Misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows. I will shelter here until the storm be past."

Scarcely had he lifted one side of Caliban's coarse cloak and crept in under it, than Stephano came along, reeling and singing as he came, bottle in hand, from which he every now and then took a good pull, and patted it, calling it "his comfort."

"I shall no more to sea, to sea.
Here shall I die ashore,"

he sang, and then he, too, stumbled up against the monster, and paused to consider such a strange sight. For not only Caliban's two big feet appeared beyond the cloak, but Trincolo's bright-coloured legs were also to be seen, though only one body.

He gave the curious object a slight kick, and Caliban began to quake all over, and to groan: "Do not torment me! Oh, prithee, do not torment me! I'll bring my wood home faster!"

Stephano stared down at the brown object, all shaking and quivering, and kicking out legs and arms in every direction.

"What's the matter? Have we devils here?" he said, and stooped down. "This is some monster of the isle, with four legs, who hath got an ague. Where did he learn our language? I will give him some of my comfort, and if I can recover him, I will tame him, and take him as a present to the King of Naples."

"Oh, don't torment me!" again groaned Caliban, shaking with fear.

"He is in a fit now," said Stephano, nodding his head gravely, "and does not talk after the wisest. He shall taste of my bottle. Come on, open your mouth; here is that which will shake your shaking, I can tell you. Open your mouth again, you cannot tell who's your friend."

As Caliban raised his head and Stephano poured some of the contents of his bottle down his great red mouth, Trincolo peeped out from the other side, and said in fear:

"I should know that voice. It should be Stephano's; but he is drowned, and these are devils. Oh, defend me!"

Stephano, who was nearly falling over Caliban in trying to make him drink, stopped and looked round.

"Four legs and two voices! A most curious monster. His forward voice now speaks well of his friend, his backward voice utters foul speeches. But I will recover him, if I use all the wine

in my bottle. Come! Amen. I will pour some wine in thy other mouth."

So he tumbled round to the other side of the curious monster, and then bent over the other voice. "Stephano! " cried Trincolo, in amazement.

"Oh," said Stephano, "that other voice doth call my name! Mercy, mercy! this is a devil and no monster. I will leave him. I have no long spoon." For the saying is, one must feed the devil with a long spoon.

So Stephano turned to run away as fast as he could.

But Trincolo was not going to be deserted by a friend; he caught hold of his coat and cried out: "Stephano! If thou art Stephano, touch me and speak to me, for I am Trincolo — be not afraid! — thy good friend Trincolo."

Stephano began to think it sounded very like Trincolo's voice, so he paused. "If thou be Trincolo, come forth. I'll pull thee by the lesser legs; if any legs be Trincolo's legs, these are they." So he pulled at the blue and yellow legs, and out came the rest of Trincolo from under the monster's cloak. "Thou art my Trincolo indeed," he said, looking at him as he shook himself and stood upright. "How earnest thou inside this moon-calf?"

"Oh," said Trincolo, "I thought he was killed by a thunder-stroke. But thou art not drowned, Stephano — oh, I hope thou art not drowned! Is the storm overblown, and art thou living? Oh, Stephano, two Neapolitans escaped!" And he danced round his recovered friend.

Caliban sat up slowly and looked at the two. "These be fine things," he said, "if they be not sprites. That's a brave god, and has most heavenly liquor. I will kneel to him." And down he went upon his knees, but Trincolo and Stephano went on talking.

"How didst thou escape?" said Stephano.

"I clung to a butt of sack which the sailors threw overboard. I swear it by this bottle, which I made out of the bark of a tree since I was cast ashore. Tell how thou didst escape?"

"Swum ashore, man, like a duck. I can swim like a duck, I'll be sworn!" answered Trincolo.

"Here, kiss the bottle! Though thou canst swim like a duck, thou art made like a goose."

Trincolo took a good pull at the bottle. "Oh, Stephano, hast thou any more of this?"

"The whole butt, man. My cellar is in a rock by the seaside, where my wine is hid." Then he turned to the kneeling Caliban and asked: "How now, moon-calf? How does thine ague?"

"Hast thou dropped from heaven?" asked Caliban solemnly.

"Out of the moon, I do assure thee," laughed Stephano. "I was the man in the moon when time was."

"I have seen thee in her, and I do adore thee," said Caliban, still kneeling.

"Come, swear to that! Kiss the bottle; anon I will furnish it with new contents."

Stephano held out the wine. Caliban took another drink.

"I swear upon this bottle to be thy true subject, for the liquor is not earthly."

Stephano and Trincolo were now in high spirits, and very much amused by the "good monster " — " the very credulous monster," as Trincolo called him.

But Caliban, who had never before drunk wine or seen such strange men, was quite sure that Stephano, who had the wondrous liquor, was a god, and so he continued to bow before him, and thought in his poor fuddled brain that if only this new god would take him as his servant he need no more obey Prospero.

"I'll show thee every fertile inch of this island," he promised. "I'll show thee the best springs, I'll pluck the berries, I'll fish for thee, and get thee wood enough. A plague upon the tyrant that I serve. I'll bear him no more sticks, but follow thee, thou wondrous man! I'll kiss thy foot, and swear myself thy servant."

"Come on, then," said Stephano, "down, and kiss and swear!" and he held out his foot.

Caliban kissed it reverently. "I prithee, let me bring thee where crabs grow, and I, with my long nails, will dig thee pig-nuts, show thee a jay's nest, and instruct thee how to snare the nimble marmoset. I'll bring thee to clustering filberts, and sometimes I'll get thee young scamels from the rocks. Wilt thou go with me?"

Stephano gave the friendly monster a pat on the back, and took Trincolo's arm to help steady himself.

"Trincolo, the King and all our company being drowned, we will inherit here. Lead the way," he said to Caliban, "without any more talking. Bear the bottle, Fellow Trincolo; we'll fill him by-and-by again."

Caliban rose joyfully, but very unsteadily, on his two great feet, and proudly led the way, singing:

"Farewell, master. Farewell, farewell!
No more dams I'll make for fish:
    Nor fetch in firing
    At requiring;
Nor scrape trencher, nor wash dish.
    'Ban, 'Ban, Ca'Caliban
    Has a new master — get a new man.
Freedom, hey-day! hey-day! Freedom — freedom!"

And so he staggered through the wood, and Stephano, laughing, followed shouting, "Oh, brave monster! lead the way."

They had not gone very far before Ariel, instructed by Prospero, joined them, flying above their heads, and full of the jokes he would play. They were all three so unsteady, that when Caliban found a pleasant spot with berries and nuts and a cool trickling stream, they gladly sat down to rest and talk over their plans.

Caliban, having cooled his head with water, began to think how he could best get rid of Prospero and let the island be governed by his new and wonderful man from the moon. He squatted admiringly at Stephano's feet, but he looked with dislike at Trincolo; he had no bottle of heavenly liquor.

I told thee, master, I am subject to a tyrant, a sorcerer, who by his cunning hath cheated me of this island."

"Thou liest!" suddenly shouted Ariel just above their heads.

Caliban thought Trincolo spoke, and turned angrily on him.

"Thou liest, thou jesting monkey, thou! I would my valiant master would destroy thee, I do not lie."

"Trincolo, if thou trouble him in his tale I will knock out some of thy teeth," said Stephano.

"Why, I said nothing! " answered Trincolo, amazed.

"Mum, then, and no more. Go on, Caliban."

"I say, by sorcery he got this isle; but if thy Greatness will revenge it on him, thou shalt be lord of it, and I will serve thee."

"But how can it be done? Canst thou bring me to this party?" asked Stephano.

"Yea, my lord, I will bring thee to him when he is asleep, and thou mayst knock a nail into his head."

"Thou liest!" again shouted Ariel, "thou canst not."

Caliban turned growling at Trincolo.

"What a pied ninny is this! I do beseech thy Greatness, give him a blow, and take the bottle from him. When that's gone he shall drink nothing but brine, for I will not show him where fresh waters are."

"Trincolo, interrupt the monster one word more, and I will beat thee," Stephano said angrily.

"Why, what did I? I did nothing!" Trincolo answered.

"Didst thou not say he lied?"

"Thou liest!" came a voice from the air, and Stephano thought Trincolo spoke, and turned on him,

"Do I so? Take that!" and he beat him with a stick that Caliban handed him, saying, "Beat him enough; after a little I will beat him too."

Trincolo got up and rubbed himself.

"A murrain on your monster, and the devil take your fingers. I did not give you the lie. You're out of your wits and hearing too. This comes of drinking sack. I'll go further off."

Caliban laughed with delight; his moon-god was surely great, and could beat everyone, Prospero included.

So he told him of the plot he had thought out, how while Prospero slept in his cave Stephano should enter softly and first seize his books; "for without his magic books," declared Caliban, "he can do nothing. Burn his books, and then batter his skull."

Stephano nodded.

Then said Caliban: "He has a beautiful daughter, and her thou shalt wed."

Stephano paused. "Is it so brave a lass?"

"Ay, indeed, my lord," assured him Caliban.

"Very well then, monster," said Stephano firmly, "I will kill the man and wed his daughter. We will be King and Queen of

this island, and Trincolo and thyself shall be viceroys. Dost like the plot? Trincolo," he called to him, " I am sorry I beat thee, but thou must keep a good tongue in thy head. Shake hands."

Trincolo came up good-naturedly; a jester was used to all sorts of moods in other men; he shook hands, and agreed to the plot.

Ariel overhead looked wise. "This I will tell my master."

"Within half an hour he will be asleep," went on Caliban, looking at the sun, "then thou canst destroy him. This makes me glad. Wilt thou teach me the song thou didst sing erewhile?"

"Flout 'em and scout 'em
And scout 'em and flout 'em;
Thought is free,"

sang Trincolo.

"Nay, that is not the tune," said Caliban.

Then Ariel played the tune on a tabor and pipe.

"What's that?" Stephano asked, looking round.

"A tune played by Nobody," said Trincolo.

"Mercy on us! Is it a devil! " cried Stephano.

"Be not afraid." Caliban spoke reassuringly.

"This isle is full of noises, sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not."

"Oh, oh!" cried Stephano, now quite pleased. "This will prove a brave kingdom to me, where I shall have my music for nothing. I wish I could see this taborer; he lays it on. . . ."

"But first thou must destroy Prospero," reminded Caliban anxiously.

"That shall be by-and-by. The sound is going away; let us follow it, and after do our work. Lead, monster, we will follow."

Ariel flew ahead, piping merrily, and thinking what a fine lot of tweakings and prickings and pinches he and his friends would give these conspirators, when Prospero knew of their nice little plot! In the meantime he led them with his magic piping so well, that all three were presently landed in a bog, which, covered with innocent-looking moss, gave no warning of its treacherous character. There, struggling and kicking, and getting deeper and muddier with every struggle, we will leave them for a time, while we turn to another part of the island, and see what poor Ferdinand and his lady-love were doing.

Chapter 4

Ferdinand had been given a task by Prospero, that never before had come to his princely hands. He was to carry a thousand heavy logs of wood, and pile them all in a store-cave near to Prospero's study.

He did it, and what is more, he did not grumble at the doing of it; for all his thoughts were with that lovely, gentle maiden, who every now and again stole out of her neighbouring cave, and gave him sweet consolation and sympathy.

Miranda could not understand her father's harsh conduct to this noble Prince; and she, who had never before dreamt of disobeying, now stole secretly out, while she thought her father slept or studied, and did her best to relieve Ferdinand's dreary task.

She sat on one of the heavy logs he placed for her near his work, and certainly he did not get on so fast with it while she was there. Making room for him beside her, she said:

"I pray you, do not work so hard. I would the lightning had burnt up all those logs that you are bid to pile. Pray you, set it down and rest awhile. My father is hard at study; he is safe for these three hours."

"Oh, most dear mistress," answered Ferdinand. "The sun will set before I shall have done what I am bound to do."

"Then let me help you," said Miranda; "pray give me that log. I will pile it for you."

Ferdinand would not hear of that. He said he would rather break his back and crack his sinews; but he sat down just for a moment and looked at Miranda, as though the sight did him much good. Then, quite timidly, he asked her name.

"Miranda," she answered; and then remembered her father had forbidden her to tell it, or, indeed, for that matter, to talk to the young Prince.

She determined to tell her father, for she would not deceive him; but if the young Prince needed her presence to cheer him in horrid tasks given by her father, why, she was going to give him cheer. So, having settled that matter, she and Ferdinand forgot all about the logs, all about Prospero, and the sun that would soon set. They remembered only that they had found one another, and that never before had they known what love meant.

"The very instant that I saw you," murmured Ferdinand, "my heart did fly to your service. I am a Prince, Miranda, but for your sake am I this patient log-man."

"Do you love me? " whispered Miranda.

"Oh, Heaven! oh, earth! bear witness. Beyond all limit of what's else in the world I do love, prize and honour you," said Ferdinand most fervently.

Miranda let a pearly tear fall. "I am a fool to weep at what I am glad of," she said, laying a little white hand in his.

"My mistress — dearest " and Ferdinand knelt to kiss it.

"My husband then," said Miranda softly; and bending forward let Ferdinand raise his lips from her hand to her face.

No more log-piling! And who do you think was looking on all the time? and looking on with great pleasure and no anger at all — why, Prospero himself. No tyrant he, and no cruel father either; he had all along been planning this very thing.

So when they looked up from their embrace, they found a smiling figure standing over them, and to his astonishment Ferdinand heard these words:

"If I have been severe with you, it was but to try your love. It has stood the test, and for compensation take my daughter. Before Heaven I do ratify this my rich gift. Oh, Ferdinand, do not smile at me that I do boast of my daughter, for you shall find that she outstrips all praise."

"I do believe it," cried Ferdinand in joy and astonishment, again embracing the no less astonished and joyful Miranda, and then both knelt to receive the blessing of the now gracious Prospero.

Their peace and joy were disturbed by the quick and invisible entry of Ariel, who whispered something in the ear of Prospero, which changed his countenance to stormy anger, and made Ferdinand say aside to Miranda: " This is strange! your father is in some passion that works him strongly."

"Never till today have I seen him touched with anger so strange," answered Miranda.

Prospero had muttered to himself: "I had forgot that foul conspiracy of that beast Caliban against my life. The moment of their plot is almost come." Then he turned to the two, and said kindly: "You look dismayed, my son; but be cheerful. I am vexed, and my old brain is troubled; but be not disturbed with my infirmity. You retire to my cell, and repose there."

"We wish you peace," said Miranda and Ferdinand, and together they went to Prospero's study.

Ariel was quickly at Prospero's side, telling of the jaunt he had led the three conspirators, through briers and furze and pricking gorse, and how they were just now climbing out of a dirty bog, close at hand, and making their way to his cell.

"Quick! " said Prospero; " we will lay a trap for these thieves. Fetch from my cell the rich-looking garments, and hang them on this branch. That will catch their eyes."

No sooner had Ariel done this, and he and Prospero made themselves invisible, than Caliban came lumbering in, followed by Stephano and Trincolo, muddy and tattered, but all of them treading as much on their toes as possible.

"Softly, tread softly," whispered Caliban. " We are now near his cell."

"Monster, your fairy, which you said was a harmless fairy, has done little better than play the Jack with us." Stephano pointed to his torn clothes and bleeding hands.

"Monster," grumbled Trincolo, "I am covered with evil-smelling mud, and my nose is in great indignation at it."

"So is mine. Do you hear, monster?" went on Stephano; "if I should take a displeasure at you, monster — look you."

"Oh, good my lord," interrupted Caliban; "be patient, for the prize I bring you to will make amends. Now speak softly, all is quiet."

"Eh, but to lose our bottle in that pool; that's more to me than a wetting, monster," said Trincolo.

"It is worse than disgrace and dishonour, monster; it is infinite loss," added Stephano.

"Prithee, my King, be quiet. See, here is the mouth of the cell," urged Caliban. "No noise, and enter. Do that good mischief which may make the island thine own for ever, and I, thy Caliban, for aye thy foot-licker."

Stephano braced himself up. "I do begin to have bloody thoughts," he said.

But just then Trincolo perceived all the grand clothes hanging on the branch, rich-coloured velvets wrought with gold, slashed doublets and silken hose.

"Oh, King Stephano," he cried, "look! Oh, noble Stephano, what a wardrobe is here for thee!" and he began pulling things down and trying them on.

"Let them alone, fool," growled Caliban; "it is but trash."

"Oh ho, monster, we know better than that," laughed Trincolo, and he and Stephano pulled off one grand garment after another.

"Give that gown to me, Trincolo; I'll have that gown." And Stephano grabbed it from Trincolo.

"The dropsy drown the fool," growled Caliban, dismayed at this waste of time; "do the murder first. If he awake, from toe to crown he will fill our skin with pinches."

"Be quiet, monster. Here, this jerkin will suit me," laughed Trincolo, while Stephano handed an armful of garments to Caliban, saying:

"Monster, lay to your fingers, and help carry the rest away to my cave, where my hogshead of wine is. Go to; carry this, or I will turn thee out of my kingdom."

"I will have none of it," said Caliban angrily; "we lose our time, and shall all be turned into barnacles, or apes."

And he spoke truly, for Prospero, having looked on long enough, summoned the sprites, who rushed in, in the form of dogs and hounds, and they bit and worried the three miscreants who tried in vain to protect themselves. Finally they chased them away from the cells, Caliban sending out most direful

roars; for he knew that his conspiracy was done for, and that punishment now lay in store for him.

Prospero called to Ariel, "Let them be hunted soundly. Hey, Silver, at them! and Fury, Fury," he called to the dogs, "Tyrant, hey!" Barking and biting, like a pack in full cry, the sprites, as dogs, followed after the wretched men, driving them through the woods.

Then Prospero folded his magic robes round him. "At this hour all my enemies lie at my mercy. But now this magic will I abjure, and when Ariel has given me some heavenly music, which I require, I will break my staff and bury it, and deep in the sea will I drown my books. Come, Ariel," he called. "Shortly shall all my labours end, and thou shalt be free as air. For a little longer follow and do me service."

Chapter 5

The service which Prospero now asked of Ariel was to bring to his cave Alonso and his lords, releasing them from the magic wood into which they had been led, and in which the sins of their past lives had haunted them. The wind seemed to sing to Alonso of his wickedness in sending the good Duke Prospero and his innocent babe out into the cold, dark sea. As for Antonio, the false brother of Prospero, his baseness was dinned in his ears, and to Sebastian, who had wished to murder and supplant his brother Alonso, the same thing happened. Each one for his sins, whispered the mysterious voices of Ariel's sprites, was being punished; the sea had cast them forth, and in this dim wood they should die a lingering death.

Strange shapes appeared to them, offering them rich foods, then suddenly vanishing, and the dishes with them.

Good old Gonzalo and the other lords sat wearily down, and awaited the next misfortune that was to come. They thought the

King and the two lords were out of their minds, for they heard no voices.

Ariel, having reported their woe to Prospero, was now only too willing to hurry off and bring them with solemn music into Prospero's presence. He drew a magic circle into which they all walked, and stood spell-bound, not seeing the tall, fine figure wrapped in long dark robes.

But slowly the music calmed their brains, and presently Ariel sang a more cheerful tune, to these words, (for he now knew his work was nearly over, and he would be free as air):

"Where the bees suck, there suck I,
In a cowslip's bell I lie;
There I couch, where owls do cry,
On the bat's back I do fly
After summer merrily.
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough."

"Help me, spirit, quickly," called Prospero. "I will take off my robes, and appear as I used to be, in the dress of the Duke of Milan."

This done, he thanked Ariel. "Why, there's my dainty Ariel. I shall miss thee, but yet thou shalt have thy freedom. Go now to the King's ship and waken all the sailors, the captain and the boatsmen, and bring them all here."

Away flew Ariel, and Prospero, making himself visible, approached the King, Alonso.

"Behold, Sir King," he said, "the wronged Duke of Milan, Prospero! And to assure you that I now speak to you, I embrace you, and bid you and your company a hearty welcome."

Such astonishment as followed these words. It would be difficult to describe. They thought they still suffered from the

magic of the Island, and yet Prospero's hand felt like warm flesh and blood.

Gonzalo was delighted. Antonio hung his head, and so did Sebastian, when Prospero whispered to them that he knew of their wicked plot, only for this time he would tell no tales. But of his wicked brother he required now his dukedom.

Alonso hastened to promise it should be restored, and told him of the sad death of his dear son Ferdinand.

Prospero smiled strangely and said: "I have the same loss in my dear daughter."

"Oh, heavens!" cried Alonso, "that they were both living in Naples, the King and Queen there! Gladly would I myself be in the muddy bed where my son lies."

Then Prospero asked them to look into his cell, which he said was his Court. There, seated comfortably together and playing chess, were the lost Ferdinand and the beautiful Miranda.

"Sweet lord, you play me false," Miranda said.

"No, my dearest love; I would not for the world," answered Ferdinand.

"Is this a vision of the island? " cried Alonso; and at his voice Ferdinand started up, and, rushing out, knelt at his father's feet.

"The seas were merciful. I have cursed them without cause."

"Now all the blessings of a glad father be with them," said Alonso, overcome with joy.

Miranda, too, stepped out of the cave, and gazed at the company in wonder and delight.

"Oh, wonder! how many goodly creatures are there here! How beauteous mankind is! Oh, brave new world that has such people in it! "

While the lords were thinking what a wonderful island this was, to be inhabited by so lovely a lady, Alonso asked if she were the goddess who had brought them all together, and how his son came to be playing chess with her.

Then Ferdinand took Miranda's hand and led her to her father. "Sir, she is mortal; and, thank Heaven! she has promised to be mine. She is the daughter of this famous Duke of Milan."

Alonso kissed Miranda, and asked her forgiveness for the ill he had done her father; and old Gonzalo, coming forward, blessed the young people. Miranda was delighted to be able to thank the kind old man who had befriended them in their need.

Then, that nothing should be wanting to their joy, Ariel brought to that spot all the sailors of the ship, and they learnt how all was in order on the royal, gallant ship, and that the strange tempest had really done no harm, nor were any lost.

After this Ariel was sent to release Caliban and his two groaning companions. When they limped in, everyone laughed to see Stephano and Trincolo decked out in gorgeous apparel, but looking battered and miserable, and rubbing their knees and backs as if full of cramps. Caliban gazed with awe at his master and the other grand nobles.

"Oh, these be brave spirits indeed! How fine my master is! I am afraid he will punish me. What a thrice-double ass was I to take this drunkard for a god! I will be wise hereafter."

When Prospero ordered him to get the cell ready and prepare a handsome banquet, he hurried off quickly.

Prospero turned to the King and said: "Sir, I invite your Highness and your company to my poor cell, where you shall rest for this one night, and where I will tell you some of the story of my life, and how I came to this isle. Then tomorrow I will bring you to your ship, and we will sail to Naples, where the wedding of these dearly beloved ones shall be celebrated."

And so it happened.

The next morning beheld a beautiful calm sea, and on it sailed a fine and stately ship bearing the King and his nobles and Prospero, with Ferdinand and Miranda, away to Italy; while Ariel and his companions did a last good service to their master by blowing fine breezes, and keeping all sunny and smooth out at sea. On the island, looking after the departing ship, lay Caliban, full length, sunning himself. Now at last he had his island to himself; only Ariel and his sprites sometimes flew round that way, and made sweet music in the air.

Macbeth

(Shakespeare)

Chapter 1

In the olden days Scotland was the haunt, not only of the good fairies, but of witches and wizards. The latter had no power over those of good and true heart, as this tale will show; but in those whose hearts were as evil soil they planted seeds which grew to terrible deeds of darkness.

Macbeth and Banquo were two Generals in the army of Duncan, King of Scotland. Owing to their valour a great victory had been gained by the Scots just at the time this tale commences, and the Norwegian foe had been completely routed.

Macbeth and Banquo, returning to the camp to receive the welcome and thanks of the King, passed over a desolate moor. It was night — a wild, stormy night; the wind swept whistling through the heather, the moon peered fitfully between dark masses of driving storm-cloud. Suddenly they saw by the pale moonlight three weird grey forms standing before them. They seemed to have sprung out of the ground; their tattered garments streamed in the wind; piercing black eyes gleamed in their hollow, withered faces. Whether they were men or women it was hard to say, for straggling grey beards showed on their chins.

"Speak, if you can," said Macbeth. "What are you?"

"All hail, Macbeth!" answered a croaking voice, as the grey forms stretched out their arms in greeting. "Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!"

Macbeth listened in amaze. To know already that he was Thane of Glamis they must be witches, for his kinsman, Sinel, Lord of Glamis, had but just died, leaving him his heir.

"All hail, Macbeth!" croaked the second witch. "Hail to thee. Thane of Cawdor!"

And the third, like some screech-owl of the night, added triumphantly:

"All hail, Macbeth, thou shalt be King hereafter!"

"Cawdor!" "King hereafter!" The face of the General changed; he started violently, as though in fear.

"Good sir, why do you start and seem to fear things that do sound so fair? " laughed Banquo. Then he turned to the fantastic shapes still standing in their path. "My noble partner you greet with great predictions," he said. "To me you speak not. If you can look into the seeds of time and say which grain will grow and which will not, speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear your favours nor your hate."

"Hail!"

"Hail!"

"Hail!" repeated each witch in turn, now addressing Banquo.

"Lesser than Macbeth and greater," said the first.

"Not so happy, yet much happier," said the second.

"Thou shalt get Kings, though thou be none," prophesied the third.

"So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!" cried all three.

Then, as they stretched out their bare arms as in farewell, Macbeth cried out eagerly:

"Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more. By Sinel's death I know I am Thane of Glamis; but how of Cawdor? The Thane of Cawdor lives, a prosperous gentleman; and to be King stands not within the prospects of belief no more than to be Cawdor. Say from whence you owe this strange intelligence? Or why

upon this blasted heath you stop our way with such prophetic greeting? Speak, I charge you."

But even as he was speaking the witches vanished. Whether they melted into the grey mist rising from the soaking moor, or the earth swallowed them, it was impossible to say.

"The earth hath bubbles as the water has, and these are of them," cried Banquo, inclining to the latter idea.

Macbeth declared:

"They vanished into the air, and what seemed corporal melted as breath into the wind. Would they had stayed!" he added regretfully.

But Banquo began to doubt the evidence of his own senses.

"Were such things here as we do speak about?" he cried in perplexity; "or have we eaten on the insane root that takes the reason prisoner? "

"Your children shall be kings," Macbeth reminded him. No doubt about those spoken words.

"You shall be King," rejoined Banquo.

"And Thane of Cawdor, too; went it not so? " said Macbeth eagerly. Already the witches' words had taken root.

"To the self-same tune and words," agreed Banquo lightly. In his soul the witches found no soil in which to sow bad seed.

As they neared the camp two messengers came swiftly to meet them. They were the Earls of Ross and Angus, sent by the King to bring the Generals quickly to his royal presence, there to receive high honours and the grateful thanks of their Sovereign.

Macbeth was specially singled out for reward. "And as an earnest of more to come," said Ross, "the King bade me call thee Thane of Cawdor."

"The Thane of Cawdor lives; why do you dress me in borrowed robes?" asked Macbeth.

Then Angus related how the Thane of Cawdor had been convicted of treason in siding with the Norwegian foe against his own country. His life and lands were therefore forfeit.

Macbeth was greatly impressed by this news. Since the witches had proved right in two things, why not in everything? for, after all, he was a near kinsman of the King. He asked Banquo if he did not hope his children would one day be Kings.

But Banquo warned him to pay no heed to the witches; "for oftentimes," said he, "the instruments of darkness, to win us to our harm, tell us truths, win us with honest trifles, to betray us in deepest consequences." And he warned Macbeth that if he let his mind dwell on the third promise of the witches it might enkindle him to aim at the crown.

But Macbeth paid no heed to the warning of his friend. From this time he thought of nothing else night or day but of how he might contrive to make the witches' third prophecy come true.

When the King, in rewarding all those who had served him, included also his brave eldest son, Malcolm, and created him Prince of Cumberland, Macbeth was filled with jealousy and hatred, though he himself had received ample rewards.

To be first in all the kingdom; with nothing less could he be content now. Black thoughts and murderous wishes sprang from the evil seed in his heart. He feared to face his own thoughts, but he nursed them carefully instead of strangling them. He bade his eye wink at what he wished his hand to do. But his hand trembled at the thought of the deed.

Macbeth's wife was made of more daring stuff. She was a woman who feared nothing and cared for nobody but her husband. Macbeth sent a letter telling her of his meeting with

the witches and the marvellous things they foretold, and how right they had proved so far. "Lay it to thy heart, the greatness that is promised thee, my dearest partner of my greatness," he wrote.

Lady Macbeth knew full well from this letter that her husband not only desired, but intended to murder Duncan in order to make himself King. She resolved to help him; and, since only by murder could he obtain the throne, she would fan up his flickering courage. For when once her mind was made up to a deed, however bad, she could not abide shilly-shallying.

Not long after this, the King, to show honour to his favoured General, sent word that he was coming to pass the night in Macbeth's castle in Inverness.

Lady Macbeth at once determined that now or never King Duncan must die. She knew that the Princes, Malcolm and Donalbain, were in turn their father's rightful heirs, but trusted that Macbeth was strong enough to set aside their claims, Duncan once out of the way.

Macbeth at first made some feeble objections to his wife's plan of carrying out the murder that very night. It seemed, even to him, a base return for the noble King's trust and favour. Also to murder a guest beneath your own roof was a thing at which the lowest scoundrel might demur. But Lady Macbeth knew full well that it was only with his tongue he objected, not with his heart.

"Art thou afraid to be the same in thine own act and valour as thou art in desire?" she asked him. "Would thou have that which thou esteemest the ornament of life, and live a coward in thine own esteem?"

But still Macbeth hesitated. His noble guest was now beneath his roof, together with his two sons and his attendants, among them Banquo and his young son Fleance.

"If we should fail " stammered Macbeth.

"We fail," retorted his wife boldly. "But screw your courage to the sticking-place, and we'll not fail!"

Then she went on to say how easily it could be done. The King, having had a long journey, would sleep soundly. The two chamberlains who kept guard always at his door should be drugged with wine, and after the murder, while they slept heavily, their daggers and their garments should be stained with blood, so that the guilt should fall on them.

To this Macbeth agreed, for it seemed a safe way of murdering. But he knew all the time that what he was about to do was a deed many a devil would have felt too mean. For this King he would murder was a good and gracious Sovereign; he was his kinsman, and had shown himself his friend and benefactor. Macbeth's conscience made a craven of him. He who had fought bravely on the battlefield, and won great renown for valour, now quailed at every sound and started at a shadow.

Lady Macbeth ordered a great banquet for the King and his suite, and all feasted and made merry till late that night. Duncan was delighted with the reception he received, and as a token of his pleasure gave a beautiful diamond ring to his "most kind hostess."

At last the castle was wrapt in stillness, and most of its inhabitants in sleep.

Only Macbeth and his wife watched and waited, like two terrible birds of prey making ready to pounce on their victim.

Having drugged the chamberlains with wine so that they would sleep through anything, Lady Macbeth laid their daggers ready for her husband's use, and set the doors of the King's chamber ajar. She had at first intended to stab the sleeping King herself, but, gazing for a moment on the calm old face, she noted

a strong likeness to her own father, and withheld her hand. She determined to leave the deed to her husband.

Meanwhile Macbeth, waiting for his wife to ring her bell when all should be ready, suddenly thought he saw a dagger hanging in the air before him. The handle was pointed towards him, and it seemed to invite him to take it. As he gazed at it in terror, uncertain whether it was real or a vision, he noticed drops of blood falling from it. He tried to clutch the handle, and his hand touched nothing. It was a dagger of his overwrought mind, he then knew; but still he would not be warned and renounce the foul deed, though he should lose his senses, his honour, his friends, and be obliged to wade in blood; for he was determined to mount the throne.

A little bell tinkled. Macbeth pulled himself together. "I go," he muttered between his teeth. "It is done; the bell invites me. Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell that summons thee to heaven or to hell." But he knew it was not Duncan who was bound for hell.

The night was dark and wild. A storm swept over the plain; the owls screeched. Chimneys were blown off housetops. Strange sounds, like lamentations, rent the air. Even the bold Lady Macbeth started and quaked as she listened for her husband's return. Presently he entered swiftly, his hands covered with blood, and carrying with him two gory daggers.

"I have done the deed," he gasped. "Didst thou not hear a noise?"

"I heard the owls scream and the crickets cry," she answered. "Did not you speak."

"When?" he asked nervously, then started, saying: "Hark! Who lies in the second chamber? "

"Donalbain," answered Lady Macbeth. She had seen to it that the massive door of that room was firmly closed.

"This is a sorry sight," cried Macbeth, with a shudder, as he looked at his blood-stained hands. Then he told her how the attendants had suddenly stirred in their sleep, and one had laughed and the other cried "Murder!" but they had turned over again, muttering a prayer of "God bless us." Macbeth would like to have said "Amen," but it stuck in his throat. This disturbed him, for he fain would have had God's blessing even with the red dagger in his hand, and made God wink at what the day would bring to light.

Lady Macbeth had no understanding for this kind of humbug.

"These deeds must not be thought after these ways," she said impatiently. "So, it will make us mad."

But Macbeth went on, with eyes as though gazing still on the horror he had worked.

"Methought I heard a voice cry: 'Sleep no more.... Macbeth does murder sleep — the innocent sleep.... Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor shall sleep no more — Macbeth shall sleep no more.' "

"Who was it that thus cried?" she reasoned with him. "Why, worthy thane, you do unbend your noble strength to think so brainsickly of things. Go, get some water and wash this filthy witness from your hand."

She took up the daggers he had laid down.

"Why did you bring these daggers from the place?" she asked, "They must lie there; go carry them, and smear the grooms with blood."

But Macbeth cried affrighted:

"I'll go no more. I am afraid to think what I have done. Look on't again I dare not."

"Infirm of purpose! " said his wife scornfully. "Give me the daggers."

She realized how easily everything might fail if left to Macbeth in this terror-struck mood. The guilt must be made to fall on the attendants, and the real criminals must play a part. It was a dangerous game, this game of murder, and required coolness and nerve; for there would be the two sons of Duncan, besides his loyal friends, to deal with.

While they were speaking, they heard loud hammering at the south entry of the castle. Already the cold, grey dawn had come, and with it Macduff and Lennox, two of Duncan's chieftains, whom he had bade call betimes on him in the morning.

They inquired of the sleepy porter for Macbeth; and when he appeared in the night clothes he had hastily put on, he led Macduff to the door of the King's chamber, and then returned to Lennox.

Shortly after, Macduff rushed back, shouting distractedly:

"O horror, horror, horror! Tongue nor heart cannot conceive nor name thee!"

"What's the matter?" cried Macbeth and Lennox in one breath.

Macduff, almost incoherent with horror and grief, bade them go to the King's chamber and behold for themselves the sacrilegious murder of the Lord's anointed.

Soon all the castle was roused. Malcolm, Donalbain, and Banquo came rushing together at the sound of the great bell Macduff ordered should be rung. Lady Macbeth, too, was obliged to come forward and act her part by pretending amazement and horror.

The question was now, who were the murderers? Lennox assured Malcolm that the crime had been committed by the

drunken chamberlains, whose hands and garments bore bloody witness to the fact. Had he not seen with his own eyes how dazed and distracted they looked when Macbeth rushed on them furiously and despatched them with his knife? It was a false move, this hasty murder of the two grooms, and one of which Lady Macbeth would never have been guilty, for instantly it aroused suspicion.

"Wherefore did you so?" demanded Macduff, while Malcolm and Donalbain kept a dark silence, which was not lost on Lady Macbeth, as her husband replied:

"Who can be wise, amazed, temperate, and loyal and neutral in a moment? No man.... Here lay Duncan, his silver skin laced with his golden blood,.. there the murderers steeped in the colours of their trade.... Who could refrain that had a heart to love, and in that heart courage to make love known?"

The speech rang false to more ears than one. Lady Macbeth cried suddenly: "Help me hence, ho!" She reeled as though she would have fainted, and they bore her away to her own chamber.

The chiefs, meanwhile, agreed to call a meeting at once in the hall and discuss what steps must next be taken. The two sons of the murdered King felt this grim castle was no safe place for them; that there was foul treachery they were convinced, yet dare not speak their thoughts. Quickly they agreed to fly for their lives, without leave-taking — Malcolm to England and Donalbain to Ireland, since apart they might the more easily evade pursuit.

Directly their flight was discovered, Macbeth caused it to be reported that it was they who had bribed the attendants to murder their father, and then, affrighted at their own deed, had fled. There were those who doubted this preposterous tale — Macduff and Banquo among them. But when Macbeth, as next of kin, put himself forward for the sovereignty, he was received by the people of Scotland with acclamations.

On the ancient stone at Scone, Macbeth, the murderer, was crowned King of Scotland, and the people shouted: "Long live the King! Long live Macbeth!"

The witches' prophecy had come true. Macbeth's highest ambition, the incredible giddy height, had been reached. But the price was not paid yet; if he would sit with any security on the throne he had waded in blood to reach, he must wade still deeper.

Banquo was the one he feared most, for Banquo had "a royalty of nature, a dauntless temper, and wisdom to guide his valour," which made Macbeth feel afraid of him. Besides, had not the witches distinctly said that Banquo, though lesser, was greater; though in one sense not so happy, was yet much happier; and though not a King himself, should be the father of Kings?

That Banquo was greater, as a giant is greater than a dwarf, Macbeth knew in his craven, distorted soul. That he was far happier with his stainless shield and noble record, beloved and trusted by all who knew him, Macbeth had but to look in his face to read. If the third prophecy should come true for Banquo, then not Macbeth's own sons, but Banquo's, would reap the fruits of all his plots and crimes. It was too bitter a thought to be endured, and Macbeth resolved to make sure this prophecy should not come true by murdering both Banquo and his son Fleance without delay.

For this purpose he hired two scoundrels accustomed to such dark night jobs, and bade them lay in wait for the man he feared and his young son. It was the evening of a great banquet Macbeth was giving to commemorate his coronation, and Banquo had been invited as chief and most honoured guest. The murderers were directed to hide in the park near the road leading up to the castle, which Banquo and his son must pass.

Lady Macbeth's great wish was fulfilled. Macbeth was King and she herself a Queen. But what was the good of this when all her happiness had fled? Not for a day nor an hour could she get peace from the haunting thought of that foul murder by which this goal had been reached. And the nights were worse than the days; for with sleep came hideous visions and terrible dreams, that shook the guilty pair till they felt it would be better far to be with those they had destroyed than endure such torture of the mind. When alone, Lady Macbeth confessed this to herself. She recognized that, having sacrificed all that made life worth living, she had gained nought, and she envied King Duncan, safe where no evil could torment him — safe from treason, steel, and poison. But with her husband Lady Macbeth disguised her real feelings in order to give him courage, and restore, if possible, his peace of mind. She urged him to banish his sorry thoughts, saying: "Things without all remedy should be without regard. What's done is done."

But Macbeth's mind was not alone filled with the past, as was that of his wife. He did not tell her how he had plotted the murder of Banquo and his son; but he hinted that there was a deed of darkness to be done, which he doubted not she would applaud when accomplished. He told her, too, that his mind was full of scorpions while Banquo and his son Fleance lived, and his wife could guess the rest. That first horrible deed had poisoned all his nature, changing a brave soldier into a suspicious, craven coward, and driving him now from one murder to another out of sheer fear. He was like a man slipping down a precipice — no hand, not even that of his guilty and remorseful wife, could stop him now.

The feast was spread, the guests assembled, and were bade a hearty welcome by Macbeth and his lady. Just as they were taking their places, Macbeth was called aside by a messenger. At the door he was faced by an evil man with blood upon his hands and face. It was one of the murderers come to tell him that his

friend Banquo lay "safe in a ditch with twenty trenched gashes on his head," the least of which was enough to kill him.

"Thou art the best of cut-throats," said Macbeth in low, hurried tones. "Yet he is good that did the like for Fleance. If thou didst it, thou art the non-pareil."

"Most royal sir," answered the cut-throat gloomily, "Fleance escaped."

Macbeth ground his teeth with rage and disappointment. So, after all, he was not secure, but still a prey to doubts and fears. He dismissed the murderer, and returned to his guests now seated round the table. Lady Macbeth calling on him to give the opening ceremony.

"May good digestion wait on appetite and health on both," said Macbeth.

He looked round on the numerous assembly, and remarked that it was unkind in Banquo to be absent on such an occasion.

"His absence, sir," said one of the lords, "lays blame upon his promise. May it please your Highness to grace us with your royal company."

Macbeth looked round the table, but saw no vacant chair.

"The table's full," he said.

"Here's a place reserved, sir," cried Lennox, pointing to an empty seat.

Macbeth looked and started. His eyes became fixed in horror; for there, in the chair reserved for himself, he beheld Banquo, his head all gashed, his throat cut, his eyes turned on him as though they would pierce his very soul.

"Which of you have done this?" gasped Macbeth, staggering and clutching the back of a chair.

"What, my good lord?" questioned a dozen voices anxiously.

"Thou canst not say I did it; never shake thy gory locks at me!" stammered Macbeth, his gaze riveted on what appeared to everyone an empty seat.

"Gentlemen, rise," cried the Thane of Ross. "His Highness is not well."

But Lady Macbeth had risen and had gone to her husband's side.

"Sit, worthy friends," she said. "My lord is often thus, and hath been from his youth. Pray you, keep seat; the fit is momentary; upon a thought he will again be well. If much you note him, you shall offend him..., Feed and regard him not."

While the guests reseated themselves, and, obeying her, set to on the banquet. Lady Macbeth turned to her husband:

"Are you a man?" she said sternly.

"Ay, and a bold one that dare look on that which might appal a devil," he replied in an awestruck undertone.

"O proper stuff!" said Lady Macbeth. "This is the very painting of your fear. This is the air-drawn dagger which you said led you to Duncan. Shame! when all's done, you look but on a stool."

She tried to lead him to sit down in the place that appeared to her still to be vacant.

But he refused to move. Pointing at the figure he saw so plainly, he cried excitedly:

"Prithee, see there! Behold! Look! Lo, how say you?"

The ghost of Banquo, still fixing him with his gaze, nodded slowly.

"If thou canst nod, speak too!" cried Macbeth.

But suddenly the ghost vanished; the place where he had been was empty.

"As I stand here, I saw it," stammered the dazed, bewildered man.

"Fie, for shame! " said his wife, still trying to bring him to himself.

"The time was, when murders were performed, the man would die and there an end, but now they rise again with twenty mortal murders on their crowns and push us from our stools. This is more strange than such a murder is," said Macbeth.

"My worthy lord, your noble friends do lack you," insisted his wife, still urging him towards the table.

Macbeth pulled himself together. He sat down, begging his guests to excuse his strange infirmity, which, he assured them, was nothing to those who knew him.

"Give me some wine," he called. "Fill full. I drink to the general joy of the whole table, and to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss. Would he were here! To all and him!" he cried, lifting his goblet, while the guests echoed the pledge and drank with him.

But before the cup had left his lips his daring wish was, to his unspeakable horror, fulfilled, and Banquo again stood confronting him. Pale as a corpse, and gashed with streaming wounds, only the eyes lived and glared at Macbeth fixedly.

"Avaunt! and quit my sight! Let the earth hide thee!" yelled Macbeth, beside himself with terror.

In vain Lady Macbeth again tried to pacify the disturbed guests. Macbeth was not to be silenced. Louder and louder he called upon the unseen apparition to take any shape but that — a savage bear, a tiger, or even himself alive and well. He would meet him with firm nerves and his good sword, but this horrible shadow, this unreal mockery, was too much for him. And as he yelled "Hence!" the ghost once more vanished, and Macbeth sat back in his chair with a sigh of relief.

"I am a man again," he said to his wife.

But Lady Macbeth, deeply disturbed by this second outburst, answered gloomily:

"You have displaced the mirth, broke the good meeting with disorder."

"How can you behold such sights and keep the natural colour of your cheeks when mine is blanched with fear? " asked Macbeth, looking round at the indifferent faces of the company, whose only wonder and concern was his own strange behaviour.

"What sights, my lord?" inquired the Thane of Ross.

But Lady Macbeth, fearful what the answer might be, interrupted hurriedly:

"I pray you speak not; he grows worse and worse; question enrages him."

She rose and turned to the guests, saying:

"Good-night. Stand not upon the order of your going, but go at once. A kind good-night to all."

So the banquet broke up amid great confusion and amazement, and many shook their heads over this strange malady of the new King.

When they learnt next day of the murder of Banquo and the flight of his son Fleance, they wondered less, and grave suspicion filled the minds of most men.

Chapter 2

The next man whom Macbeth determined to remove from his path was Macduff, Thane of Fife. At the coronation banquet to which he had been bidden, Macduff had been absent, making excuse that he had gone to Fife. That he should deny his presence on such a great occasion filled the usurper with fear

and wrath. He had paid spies in the house of every thane of importance, and forthwith sent to find out the true reason of Macduff's absence.

Lady Macbeth watched her husband with growing anxiety. He became ever more moody and strange, seeking constantly to be alone. The terrible secrets they shared chained yet divided them, for between them always stood the murdered forms of their victims, so that even their love for each other could no longer give them any happiness. She feared for his reason, and urged him to take more repose and sleep. But Macbeth had murdered sleep, that sweet restorer, and never more for either of them was any sleep possible save that of nightmare. She, who, to win a crown for her husband, had aided and abetted in the foul murder of the good old King, could not now stop the awful consequences. Macbeth had acquired the habit of murder, and she was powerless to stop him. Fear of losing his ill-gotten crown drove him from one murder to another.

"Blood will have blood," he told his wife.

To insure his own safety he would stick at nothing; for, having gone so far, it was impossible to turn back.

He determined to seek out the witches and hear from them what fate lay before him. He desired to know the worst, whatever it might be, even though he feared to know it.

In a dark cavern in the mountain-side, the three witches were met together round a boiling cauldron. Their queen Hecate had summoned them, this being a very important occasion. She was even more hideous than the three witches, with her nose like the beak of a hawk, her eyes like sharp points of steel in the gloom of the cave. The sound of her voice in wrath was the one thing which could cause the witches to tremble. She was angry now, having learnt that the three sisters had dared to meddle with the affairs of Scotland without first consulting her. Small things, like wrecking a boat, killing swine, or blighting a

cornfield, they might contrive by themselves; but when it came to trafficking with Kings and trading in the affairs of a kingdom, which required the use of potent spells and charms, of which Hecate alone was the mistress, she naturally expected to be consulted. She rated them soundly.

"Beldames that you are! Saucy and overbold!" she cried. Then bade them make ready a potent brew of spells and charms, for that very night Macbeth would seek them to know further of his destiny.

Into the cauldron the witches threw the tooth of a wolf, a lizard's leg, the toe of a frog, the eye of a newt, an adder's fork, a blind-worm's sting, the scale of a dragon, an owlet's wing, the wool of a bat, the tongue of a dog, and many other choice morsels. Round and round they stirred the mixture into a thick gruel, singing as they did so in croaking tones:

"Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble!"

When the spell was well cooked in the charmed pot, Hecate threw in a vaporous drop she had caught as it hung upon the corner of the new moon. This, distilled, would raise such magic sprites as would draw Macbeth on to his confusion and ruin, for Hecate highly disapproved of Macbeth. Witch though she was, she had her code of honour and justice; he had shown he had none.

All at once one of the witches cried:

"By the pricking of my thumbs
Something wicked this way comes."

They stopped their dance round the cauldron and listened. There was a low knocking outside the cavern.

"Open locks
Whoever knocks,"

cried the witches, and Macbeth entered, muffled in a long, dark cloak, which half hid his face.

"How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags!" he said uneasily. "What is't you do?"

"A deed without a name," answered all the witches together.

"I conjure you," said Macbeth, "by that which you profess, howe'er you come to know it, answer me to what I ask."

"Speak," said the first witch.

"Demand," said the second.

"We'll answer," promised the third.

"Say if thou wouldst rather hear it from our lips than from our masters? " inquired the first witch.

"Call 'em — let me see 'em," said Macbeth.

Then slowly up out of the smoking cauldron came a huge head, with a helmet and visor up. He fixed Macbeth with his piercing gaze.

"Tell me, thou unknown power," began Macbeth; but the first witch silenced him, saying:

"He knows thy thought; hear his speech, but say thou nought."

Then the armed head spoke in deep, solemn tones.

"Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! beware Macduff; beware the Thane of Fife!"

With that he disappeared into the cauldron before Macbeth could ask him anything more, though he greatly desired to do so.

"He will not be commanded," said the witch. "But here's another, more powerful than the first."

And even as she spoke, Macbeth saw something else coming out of the cauldron. This time it was a boy, all covered with blood, as though he had been fighting; and the blood was not his own, but that of another. He cried in a high, screaming voice:

"Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn the power of man!"

With these words he descended into the magic pot and vanished.

Macbeth had hardly recovered from his glad surprise at hearing these words, which, like those of the first apparition, exactly fitted in with his own evil wishes, when a third head rose from the cauldron. This time it was that of a fair young child, on his brow a kingly crown, and in his hand the branch of a tree.

"What is this that wears upon his baby brow the round and top of sovereignty?" cried Macbeth.

"Listen," replied the witches, "but speak not to it."

Then the child spoke, but in no child's voice, and the heart of Macbeth beat fast as he listened; for this is what he said:

"Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no care who frets, or where conspirers are; Macbeth shall never vanquished be until great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill shall come against him."

"That will never be!" cried Macbeth triumphantly. "Who can impress the forest, bid the tree unfix his earth-bound root?"

Of course the thing was absurd, he argued, and merely meant that he was safe till all the laws of Nature were turned upside down.

"Yet my heart throbs to know one thing," he asked anxiously of the witches, as the child disappeared. "Tell me, if your art can tell so much, shall Banquo's issue ever reign in this kingdom?"

The witches replied, with warning fingers upheld:

"Seek to know no more."

This made Macbeth but the more determined to have his question answered.

"I will be satisfied," he insisted angrily. "Deny me this, and an eternal curse fall upon you! "

Then the witches, slowly moving round the cauldron, cried each in turn:

"Show! "

"Show!"

"Show!"

And in chorus they chanted dismally:

"Show his eyes and grieve his heart,
Come like shadows, so depart."

Slowly uprose a long procession of kingly figures, eight in number, wearing crowns and bearing sceptres, followed at last by one who sent a thrill of horror and rage through the heart of Macbeth, for he bore the likeness of the murdered Banquo. Macbeth noted that some of the forms carried treble sceptres, signifying they should reign over three countries, and that the last one bore in his hand a glass in which was reflected another procession of Sovereigns.

"What! will the line stretch out to the crack of doom?" cried Macbeth, beside himself with fury. "Horrible sight! Filthy hags!" he shouted to the witches. "I'll see no more!"

Yet he could not turn away from the sight even if he would, and when the ghost of Banquo pointed at the long line of kings his heart sank and he gasped:

"Now I see, 'tis true; for the blood-boltered Banquo smiles upon me, and points at them for his.... Is this so?" he turned savagely on the witches.

And the first witch answered in a voice like the raven's croak:

"Ay, sir, all this is so; but why stands Macbeth thus amazedly?" She turned to the others with a laugh, and sang:

"Come, sisters, cheer we up his sprites,
And show the best of our delights.
I'll charm the air to give a sound.
While you perform your antic round;
That this great King may kindly say
Our duties did his welcome pay."

As the weird sisters and their queen danced round and round the cauldron, their grey floating garments became more and more smoke-like, and then in an instant they seemed to melt into the air and were gone, leaving Macbeth alone in the dark cave.

Though he loathed and cursed the witches, Macbeth lost no time in acting on the warning they had given him; for fear and hate of Macduff had already taken deep root in his heart. That Macduff had failed to appear at the banquet was quite sufficient to seal his doom, even had the witches been silent on this point. But the great power of the weird sisters lay in the fact that they could read an evil heart like an open book. This gift makes prophesying an easy business.

But Macduff, the Thane of Fife, had already fled to England, there to join Malcolm, the son of Duncan, and raise an army to deliver Scotland from the usurper who was bringing ruin on the country.

Great was the wrath of Macbeth on learning that his prey had escaped him. In a spirit of cruel vengeance he set out there and then to seize Macduff's castle and put to the sword his wife and children and all who were of any kin to him.

Lady Macduff bitterly resented this action of her husband in fleeing to England, without even a farewell word or thought of the danger in which he was leaving his family.

"Even the poor little wren," she said to the Thane of Ross, who tried to excuse Macduff, "the smallest of birds, her young ones in the nest, will stay and fight the owl.... Yet he has left his wife, his babes, and his home in a place from whence himself must fly."

To her it appeared as though Macduff could have no real love for either her or his children, so to leave them to the tender mercies of the murdering tyrant, Macbeth. But the real fact was that Macduff, though he loved his wife and babes as well as the brave little wren, had not half the bird's sense or imagination. He was a well-meaning but stupid man, with only room in his slow brain for one idea at a time. Macbeth was the curse of his unhappy country; therefore Macduff, must rid the land of him, and that without even so much delay as to take farewell of the wife he loved. The best means of defeating the tyrant was to join Malcolm and engage the help of England. So to England he fled, fast as his horse could carry him. That by so doing, and leaving his family thus unprotected, he was deliberately flinging them to the wolf, never struck this poor, slow-witted Scot till the mischief was done.

He learnt of the terrible tragedy from his cousin, the Thane of Ross, who fled to England to break the awful news that all those Macduff held dear on earth had been slaughtered by Macbeth.

Poor Macduff was stunned at first by the cruel blow. He could not believe in such atrocious villainy. Then, too late, he bitterly reproached himself as the cause of their murder.

"Sinful Macduff!" he cried, heart-broken; "they were all struck for thee;... not for their own demerits, but for mine fell slaughter on their souls.

"Oh, I could play the woman with mine eyes! but," he continued, rousing himself from his grief and cutting short his bitter plaint, "front to front bring thou this fiend of Scotland and

myself. Within my sword's length set him; if he 'scape, Heaven forgive him too!"

Gladly Malcolm joined him in this heart's cry for a just vengeance. Together they went to the King of England, who promised them ten thousand war-like men to march to Scotland under Siward, Earl of Northumberland, and General of the English forces.

Lady Macbeth had believed that the first treacherous murder would bring them both not only glory and power, but the height of happiness. She quickly found out her mistake. No sooner was Macbeth crowned King, even before the coronation banquet had taken place, she bitterly confessed to herself that having "spent all," "naught was gained," and that it would be better far to be the victim they had murdered than to dwell in such "doubtful joy." Gladly she would now have turned Macbeth's energies into sane and useful directions, and seen him become a kingly ruler; but having helped him to start on this downward course, she was powerless to stop him. Remorse and horror so filled her mind that at last her brain gave way under the terrible strain. Even in sleep she could get no rest, no respite from the vision of Macbeth's murders, and the blood on her own soul she saw in fancy staining her white hands.

At night she would rise continually in her sleep and walk about her apartments, speaking to herself of things she dare not whisper in her waking hours, rubbing her hands as though trying to wash out ugly stains.

While Macbeth was away with his army he bade a trusty lady-in-waiting take care of his wife, and nurse her in her sickness. This lady, alarmed at the strange things her mistress said and did at night, called in a doctor to see if he could find out the cause of the Queen's illness, and perchance cure her complaint. Two nights the doctor sat up and watched; but the Queen, though she was restless and sleepless, did nothing

strange. He began to doubt what the lady-in-waiting reported, when, on the third night, just as the two were talking in low tones together about her, Lady Macbeth suddenly rose from her bed, and, taking the lighted taper which always stood by her bedside — for she dreaded the dark — she walked past the two watchers. Her eyes were wide open, but the doctor saw at once their sense was shut.

Placing the light on a table, she began then to rub her hands and speak to herself. They listened attentively.

"Out, damned spot! out, I say." She rubbed her hands desperately. "One — two! Why, then, 'tis time to do't. Hell is murky! Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afraid? What need we fear who know it when none can call our power to account? Yet who would have thought the old man had so much blood in him?"

"Do you mark that?" said the doctor, with a shudder.

The lady nodded; she had heard such words before from the unhappy Queen.

"The Thane of Fife had a wife; where is she now? " went on the sleep-walker. " What, will these hands ne'er be clean?..."She looked at her white hands with horror. "Here's the smell of blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh! " she moaned.

"What a sigh is there!" said the doctor, shaking his head. "The heart is sore charged."

"I would not have such a heart in my bosom," said the lady-in-waiting, "for the dignity of my whole body."

"This disease is beyond my practice," confessed the doctor, who was an honest man.

Then again Lady Macbeth spoke, and this time she revealed that Banquo also was a victim; for she spoke these tell-tale words:

"I tell you yet again, Banquo's buried. He cannot come out of his grave."

The doctor and nurse looked at one another. So the whispered suspicions were true, then! Banquo, the noble, brave soldier, once the friend of Macbeth, had been murdered by this bloodthirsty tyrant's orders.

The doctor rose to go.

"More needs she the divine than the physician," he said to the lady-in-waiting. "Look after her.... Good-night. I think, but dare not speak."

Still the doctor felt it his duty to tell Macbeth somewhat of the truth. When the King inquired anxiously, "How does your patient, doctor?" he replied:

"Not so sick, my lord, as she is troubled with thick-coming fancies, that keep her from her rest."

"Cure her of that," answered Macbeth impatiently. "Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased, pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow, . . . cleanse the bosom of that perilous stuff which weighs upon the heart?"

The old doctor shook his head as he answered cautiously:

"Therein the patient must minister to himself."

"Throw physic to the dogs! " Macbeth flung at him angrily. "I'll none of it. If thou couldst, doctor " — he turned to him again, for his wife was the one person on earth for whom he cared — "find her disease and purge it to a sound and pristine health, I would applaud thee to the very echo that should applaud again. Pull it off, I say."

But when he was alone Macbeth felt almost as wretched as his wife. To himself he confessed he was sick of life. Nothing to look forward to in future years, not a friend on earth, not a soul to love or respect him; but, in their stead, "curses, not loud but

deep; mouth-honour, breath, which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not."

This was all he had reaped for the murders he had sown. A barren crop of kingly honours indeed!

The doctor had bade the lady-in-waiting watch the Queen, but this was no easy matter. She realized that the words the Queen spoke must be heard by no one lest dire trouble come of it; to keep her in sight day and night, and humour her waking and sleeping, became more and more difficult. For the wretched Queen got worse instead of better. The gnawing of her conscience became intolerable, and the visions of the murdered victims drove her at last to such despair that she could bear it no longer. Watching her opportunity, one night she took her own life.

When her dead body was discovered by her ladies, a terrible cry arose from the Queen's apartments. Macbeth, busy with preparations for a siege of the castle, started and listened.

"What is that noise?" he asked of Seyton, one of his officers.

Seyton hurried away to inquire. Macbeth felt a presentiment of evil, but he was accustomed to this; he muttered to himself:

"I have almost forgot the taste of fears. The time has been, my senses would have cool'd to hear a night-shriek. I have supp'd full with horrors. Direness, familiar to my slaught'rous thoughts, cannot once start me."

But he was uneasy, and the face of Seyton made him more so when he presently returned, breathless and pale.

"Wherefore was that noise? " demanded Macbeth.

"The Queen, my lord, is dead," replied Seyton.

Macbeth had now lost all save his ill-gotten crown and his worthless life. More than ever, now that his wife was gone, he felt the vanity of all he had lived for.

"Out, out, brief candle!" he cried, in the bitterness of his soul. "Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

This is all his life and that of his wretched wife seemed to be. Macbeth forgot that neither of evil deeds nor good ones can it be said they are heard no more. "The consequences of both go on and on like the ripples round a stone cast into a pond."

But Macbeth had little time for mourning or moralizing. News came that the avenging army, under Malcolm, his uncle and Siward, Earl of Northumberland, was marching across the plain towards Dunsinane — a vast army, said the breathless messengers, ten thousand strong.

Macbeth, remembering how the witches had foretold that never should he be defeated till Birnam wood removed to Dunsinane, treated the news with proud contempt.

"Our castle's strength," he cried, "will laugh a siege to scorn. Here let them lie till famine and the ague eat them up."

But presently another panting messenger entered, crying in dismay that, as he stood keeping his watch upon the hill, behold he looked towards Birnam, and lo! the wood began to move!

"Liar and slave!" roared Macbeth.

But the soldier stuck to his tale.

"Let me endure your wrath if 't be not so," he persisted. "Within this three mile you may see it coming; I say, a moving grove."

"If thou speakest false," cried the tyrant, "upon the next tree shalt thou hang alive till famine cling thee. If thy speech be sooth, I care not if thou dost for me as much."

The witches had said, "Fear not till Birnam's wood do come to Dunsinane." And now a wood was coming, if this knave indeed spoke true.

"Arm, arm, and out!" shouted Macbeth to his followers. "If this which he avouches does appear, there is nor flying hence nor tarrying here."

Macbeth hastily armed as he marshalled his men; for though he felt, as he said, "aweary of the sun," and wished the world were come to an end, yet he would fain die with harness on his back.

What the sentinel had said was true. For, as the army of Malcolm marched through Birnam forest, Malcolm had commanded every man to cut down a bough and bear it aloft, thus disguising the number of his men and making them appear far more than they really were.

Out into the darkness dashed Macbeth. The alarm bells of the castle pealed forth into the night, summoning all his followers to fight, and soon came the noise of clashing weapons, shouts, and groans from all parts of the plain. But Malcolm's army marched on victorious, and many of Macbeth's followers joined it, only too glad to welcome back the son of their good King Duncan.

Meanwhile Macbeth, after killing in single combat the brave young son of Siward, Earl of Northumberland, who fell cursing him for an "abhorred tyrant," suddenly found himself face to face with Macduff. In vain he would have turned back; Macduff pursued him.

"Turn, hell-hound, turn!" he cried.

"Of all men," muttered Macbeth, "I have avoided thee.... My soul is too much charged with blood of thine already."

Macduff drew his sword.

"I have no words," he answered. "My voice is in my sword, thou bloodier villain than terms can give thee out!"

So they fought, and a desperate fight it was, Macduff avenging the brutal murder of his wife and children. Macbeth resolved to die hard if die he must, and win as many gashes as possible for his bloody sword.

But his hour had struck. Macduff's arm, strong with his avenging purpose, overcame the murderer-King at last, and Macbeth fell, never to rise again.

Then Macduff, with one stroke, cut off his un-kingly head and bore it to Malcolm in triumph.

"Hail, King!" he cried to the son of Duncan. "Behold where stands the usurper's cursed head.... Hail, King of Scotland!"

Hamlet

(Shakespeare)

Chapter 1

In the days when Denmark was a great kingdom there was a good King called Hamlet. He received tribute every year, even from such a great country as England, and had been victorious in a war against that mighty pirate King of Norway, Fortinbras. In this war Fortinbras finally lost not only his life, but forfeited all the lands he had formerly seized from Denmark.

Under the rule of King Hamlet the Danish people were happy and prosperous, and great was the grief throughout the land when one day the King was found lying dead in the orchard of his royal palace at Elsinore.

It was the custom of King Hamlet to betake himself every afternoon to this favourite spot, and there to rest awhile under the blossoming cherry and apple trees. His brother Claudius gave out that the King had been bitten by a poisonous snake while sleeping in the orchard. Claudius himself, so he said, had found the King lying dead on the ground. He had at once sent for Queen Gertrude, who appeared overwhelmed with grief at the sight of her dead lord.

The King had an only son named also Hamlet. This son admired and loved his father with all his heart. He was of a noble, thoughtful nature, and, though well able to use his sword, preferred a studious, peaceful life to one of fighting and broils. To this young Prince the sudden tragedy of his father's death came as a great sorrow, to which presently was added the bitter disillusion of his mother's most strange and unseemly conduct.

For Queen Gertrude, who at first had mingled her tears and lamentations with those of her son, soon not only ceased to weep, but appeared to find ample consolation in the society of

her dead husband's brother. This Claudius was the very opposite in all respects of the late King, being of a crafty, crooked nature, and with a countenance to match, a man for whom Hamlet had always felt an instinctive dislike, notwithstanding his most plausible and glib tongue.

It was with horror and amazement, therefore, that within two months of his father's death the marriage was suddenly announced of Queen Gertrude to Claudius, together with the proclamation of the latter as King of Denmark. Hamlet himself was the rightful heir to the throne; but he found that his uncle had, with his plausible talk, so worked out his own crafty plans that the people gave him their vote on condition that Hamlet should succeed him. Yet the Danes were loyally devoted to their Prince, and how they came to agree to this was almost as difficult to understand as the second marriage of the Queen — she who had always seemed such a loving and dutiful wife, and to whom the late King had been so devoted.

The more Prince Hamlet pondered on these things the more morose and melancholy he became. In vain did Claudius try to make up to him with fair and flattering speeches. In vain the Queen urged him to put aside his black clothes of mourning, and join in the marriage festivities. Hamlet replied bitterly:

"'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother.
Nor customary suits of black . . .
That can denote me truly;
I have that within which passeth show,
These but the trappings and the suits of woe."

His mother was silent. She knew how hypocritical her tears and garments of woe must appear, in face of her marriage with Claudius before the grass was green on her husband's grave. But Claudius was always ready with specious talk and argument:

"'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet," said he, "to give these mourning duties to your father. But, you must know, your father lost a father; that father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound in filial obligation for some term to do obsequious sorrow. But," he went on piously, "to persevere in obstinate condolement is a course of impious stubbornness; 'tis unmanly grief; it shows a will most incorrect to Heaven; a heart unfortified, a mind impatient. . . ."

And on he went prating and preaching till poor Hamlet felt he would lose his senses if he listened to him any longer. He longed to fly from Denmark, and return at once to the University in Germany, where he had been studying. But at his mother's urgent entreaty he gave up his intention for the present. He had, in fact, no heart for anything. All seemed to him "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable." This world appeared no better than an unweeded garden that grows to seed; where only things rank and gross, like his uncle, flourished, and where a noble tree, such as his father, was cut down in one fatal hour.

Even his love for the beautiful Ophelia, daughter of old Polonius, the Lord Chamberlain, could not divert Hamlet from his sad and bitter thoughts. For it was not only his father he mourned, but his mother, who to him was now worse than dead, since she showed herself both false and fickle to the memory of his father — he who had been to her so tender and true, he feared lest even the winds of heaven should visit her face too roughly.

So utterly miserable was Hamlet, he would gladly have ended all by taking his own life had he not felt that God has fixed his decree against such self-slaughter. For whereas it is a fine and noble thing to give your life out of love for friend or country, it is the act of a coward to slink out of the fight when it grows hot, leaving your work to be done by another.

Hamlet was soon to learn that there was a very hard piece of work appointed for his doing. Among his friends Hamlet had one who was dear to him as Jonathan to David or Damon to Pythias, a young man named Horatio. One day he came to Hamlet with a strange story of how he and two others, officers of the watch, had, on two occasions, seen a mysterious apparition exactly resembling the late King, even to his beard, which was of a sable colour silvered with grey. This apparition had appeared just at midnight on the battlements. He was in complete armour; but his visor being lifted they had seen his face, which was pale and sorrowful. He had seemed about to speak when Horatio saw him, but just then the morning cock crew, and he had vanished.

Hamlet was deeply impressed by this story, and determined himself to watch that same night on the battlements.

"My father's spirit in arms!" he said to himself. "All is not well; I doubt some foul play."

It was a cold, frosty night, but clear and bright. Suddenly, as Hamlet and his friends were conversing together, there, in the moonlight, appeared a figure exactly like the late King as he had been in life. Hamlet's heart stood still with fear and astonishment; but the face he saw was so unmistakably that of his father that he soon forgot all fear, and addressing the figure as "Father, King, royal Dane," besought him to speak and tell him the meaning of his coming.

For answer the ghostly figure beckoned Hamlet to follow him, as though he would speak with him alone.

Horatio and the two officers of the watch tried to hold him back, but Hamlet shook them off, threatening to make a ghost of any man who tried to stop him, and followed the shadowy form where it led him to a distant part of the battlement. There Hamlet stopped and begged the ghost to speak.

"I am thy father's spirit," said the ghost. "If ever thou didst thy dear father love, listen now, and revenge his most foul and unnatural murder."

"Murder?" cried Hamlet, horror-struck.

"Murder most foul," repeated his father. " 'Tis given out that, sleeping in mine orchard, a serpent stung me; so the whole ear of Denmark is, by a false process of my death, rankly abused. But know, thou noble youth, the serpent that did sting thy father's life now wears his crown."

"Oh, my prophetic soul! My uncle!" cried Hamlet, aghast.

The ghost then went on to say how this treacherous snake had not only murdered him by pouring into his ear the deadly poison, hebana, while he slept, but with guile and witchcraft of his cunning wits had obtained such an evil influence over the Queen that her very soul had been poisoned and completely won by him.

Only in dealing just vengeance on the traitor Claudius, his father forbade Hamlet to do anything against his mother.

"Leave her to Heaven," he said, "and to those thorns that in her bosom lodge to prick and sting her."

Sadly he told his son that, in that other world where now he dwelt, man had to reap the consequences of all sins and shortcomings done on earth, each soul must suffer and atone till all its stains are burnt and purged away. He had been permitted to return to earth that the dread secret of his murder might be revealed and avenged. Then, as the faint light of dawn began to appear, he bade farewell to his dear son, saying solemnly:

"Adieu, adieu, Hamlet! remember me!"

In an instant the ghostly form vanished, and Hamlet was left alone, his brain and heart as though on fire with the awful thing he had learnt.

"Remember thee! remember thee!" he kept on repeating to himself. Ay, indeed, he would remember so long as he should live.

Presently Horatio and the two officers, who had followed as near as they dared, came up and begged to know what had happened. But Hamlet would say nothing, and made them all three swear to keep secret the fact of the ghost having appeared. Afterwards, when he and Horatio, his friend, were alone, he confided to him all that had passed, knowing he could trust him well.

Chapter 2

Though the terrible secret of his father's murder weighed constantly on Hamlet's soul, he could not make up his mind as to the best way of avenging the foul crime. Claudius never stirred without a guard, and was by nature suspicious and cowardly. It was important to act with caution, and on no account betray his secret feelings of hate and loathing for this false traitor. So, the better to disguise his feeling and intention, Hamlet pretended to be mad. His friend Horatio alone knew that this madness was but feigned.

The Queen was much disturbed, fearing that his mind had given way from preying overmuch on his father's death and her hasty marriage. Claudius felt perplexed and uncertain what to make of it, for Hamlet said things that made him very uneasy.

Then Polonius, the Lord Chamberlain, a prosy and pompous old person, came to the King and Queen full of importance to say he had found the true cause of the Prince's madness and melancholy — it was nothing more nor less than love for his fair daughter Ophelia! He brought with him a letter of Hamlet's in proof of this, and read it aloud:

"Doubt that the stars are fire;

Doubt that the sun doth move;
Doubt truth to be a liar;
But never doubt I love."

And more of the same, vowing undying love to his "soul's idol," and signed with his own name.

In obedience to her father, Ophelia had given up this letter, being, poor maiden, in sore perplexity and trouble. For though she had given all her heart to the Prince, both her father and brother, Laertes, had solemnly warned her against believing a word of his love-making.

"His favour is sweet, not lasting," said Laertes; " the perfume of a minute, no more. . . . Perhaps he loves you now; but you must fear such love, for his will is not his own; he may not, as unvalued persons do, carve for himself, for on his choice depends the safety and the health of the whole State. Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain, if with too credent ear you list his songs or lose your heart."

Ophelia knew Laertes spoke out of love for her. He appealed to her maidenly pride, and she promised she would take to heart his counsel.

Old Polonius, her father, had gone further still. He told poor Ophelia she was "a green girl " if she believed any of the tender words the Prince spoke to her. "Springs to catch woodcocks. . . blazes giving more light than heat." And he sternly bade her "be more scanty of her maiden presence, and give less time and talk to the Lord Hamlet."

In vain Ophelia pleaded that Hamlet had spoken to her "only in honourable fashion."

"Ay, fashion you may call it," the old man answered with scorn." Go to — go to!"

He would not have his dearly loved daughter waste her heart on one who, even if he loved her, would not be allowed to marry her — "A Prince," as he said, "out of her star."

It was in consequence of all this advice from her father and brother that Ophelia had given up her lover's letter, a letter that in reality Hamlet had written as a farewell. For, with this terrible business on hand, he must think no more of love and marriage, though he could not help wishing Ophelia to know of his undying love for her.

The King and Queen were glad to think that perhaps old Polonius was right, and Hamlet's strange madness due to love for Ophelia, and the fact that in obedience to her father she had refused to see him any more.

"The Prince, repulsed, fell into a sadness, then into a fast, thence to a watch, thence into a weakness, thence to a lightness; and by this declension into the madness wherein now he raves, and all we wail for,"explained the Lord Chamberlain, always a man of many words.

"Do you think it is this?" the King asked the Queen.

"It may be very likely," Hamlet's mother answered.

Polonius was triumphant.

"Hath there ever been a time when I have said positively "Tis so' and it hath proved otherwise? " he demanded; and not even Claudius contradicted him. It was decided that, in order to prove the truth of Polonius' idea, a meeting should be arranged, as though by accident, between Hamlet and Ophelia in the lobby, where Hamlet often retired in hope of being away from prying eyes. For hours he would pace up and down, thinking what best to do. Old Polonius and Claudius arranged to hide behind the curtains and take note of what passed between the Prince and Ophelia.

To all the curious people who approached him and intruded on his solitude, Hamlet gave such strange replies they went away convinced he had lost his reason. For he spoke out his mind, uttering plain and simple truths without any mincing or varnish — a course so unusual, it could only be due to madness, they concluded. But even old Polonius detected there was method in such madness. As, for instance, when, after boring the Prince to desperation, the old man said:

"My honourable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you."

And Hamlet replied absently:

"You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal; except my life, except my life, except my life."

Ophelia was sent for and the Queen received her most graciously. Gladly now she was ready to consent to the marriage if it would restore Hamlet to his right mind; for, with all her faults, the Queen truly loved her son.

"I do wish that your good beauties be the happy cause of Hamlet's wildness; so shall I hope your virtues will bring him to his wonted way again, to both your honours," she said to Ophelia.

"Madam, I wish it may," answered the gentle Ophelia. But she was soon to know it was not of her that Hamlet thought now.

Presently he entered the lobby where she had been stationed with a book, while her father and the King hid behind the arras to note what passed. For some time Hamlet did not see her, but, absorbed in his melancholy thoughts, he spoke to himself:

"To be, or not to be. . . . Whether it were nobler in the mind to suffer, and by taking arms against a sea of troubles oppose and fight them, or to die and so end the heartache and thousand

troubles flesh is heir to." This was the question racking poor Hamlet's brain.

Suddenly he perceived Ophelia also walking in the lobby, her head bent low over her book.

"The fair Ophelia!" he cried in surprise. Then he remembered that even to her he must keep up the appearance of madness. So he added in a light tone:

"Nymph, in thy orisons, be all my sins remembered."

Ophelia answered sadly:

"Good my lord, how does your honour for this many a day?"

"I humbly thank you, well, well, well," replied Hamlet, as though she were nothing but a stranger to him.

Ophelia remembered her brother's warning, "Sweet not lasting was the love of Princes"; alas! it was true then. Taking from her bosom a packet of letters and jewels, she held them out to him, saying with gentle dignity:

"My lord, I have remembrances of yours that I have longed long to re-deliver; I pray you now receive them."

Hamlet waved her aside.

"No, not I; I never gave you aught."

"My honoured lord," said Ophelia proudly, "you know right well you did; and with them, words of so sweet breath composed as made the things more rich; their perfume lost, take these again, for to the noble mind rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind."

Her words must have cut Hamlet to the quick. But he steeled himself to act out the part of one whose reason was distraught, and to pretend he no longer loved, nor even remembered, her. For her happiness he judged it were best she should forget him and marry someone else, or, better still, enter a nunnery where she would be safe from the wickedness of the

world. So he answered indifferently that, though he had loved her once, she should not have believed in him, for now he loved her not.

"I was the more deceived," answered Ophelia bitterly.

But the next moment all bitterness was forgotten in her grief at the fact of so noble a mind being overthrown. For Hamlet was mad, quite mad, she felt sure, as he went on to rave against all men, himself foremost among them, as "arrant knaves"; declared he was proud, revengeful, ambitious and indifferent honest, with more offences than he had thoughts to put them in, or time to act them in. Why should such fellows as he be suffered to crawl between earth and heaven? Then suddenly he stopped raving, and wheeling round, asked Ophelia, with no doubt a shrewd guess at the bulging curtain:

"Where's your father?"

"At home," answered poor Ophelia, in all innocence as to her father's hiding-place.

"Let the doors be shut on him that he may play the fool nowhere but in his own house," retorted Hamlet. "Farewell!"

"Oh, help him, you sweet heavens!" cried Ophelia in despair; for to her loyal soul that speech alone settled any doubt about the Prince's madness.

Hamlet turned as he was going, and said again bitterly:

"Get thee to a nunnery. Or if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool, for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. . . . To a nunnery go, and quickly, too. Farewell!"

"Oh, heavenly powers!" prayed poor Ophelia, "restore him."

Hamlet was no longer thinking of Ophelia. It was the thought of his mother that tortured him, and, indeed, drove him to the very brink of madness, as he denounced all women because of the sins of one, as mankind are ever wont to do.

"I have heard of your paintings, too, well enough. God hath given you one face, and you make yourselves another. You jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nickname God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on't; it hath made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages; those that are married already, all but one, shall live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery go. . . ."

No wonder the gentle Ophelia, whose fair face was as guiltless of paint as the lily itself, and her pure soul as innocent of guile, wept for his lost reason. But no resentment for the insults hurled at her innocent head found place with Ophelia, no feeling save sorrow — sorrow so profound it went near to break her heart.

"Oh, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!" she cried, as Hamlet strode away. . . ." That noble and most sovereign reason, like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh. That unmatched form and feature of blown youth, blasted with ecstasy! Oh! woe is me, to have seen what I have seen, hear what I hear!"

Noiselessly the arras moved aside, and Claudius and Polonius reappeared, deep in converse. "This was no case of a love-lorn youth," said Claudius uneasily. "There's something in his soul o'er which his melancholy sits in brood, and I do doubt the hatch and the disclose will be some danger." His conscience made him feel the peril to which the old Chamberlain was blind. "He shall with speed to England for the demand of our neglected tribute. Haply the seas and countries different shall expel this something-settled matter in his heart. . . . What think you of it?" he asked Polonius, as though anxious for his counsel. But all the time he had determined that by hook or crook such a menace to himself must be removed, and farther than England.

Old Polonius, who never saw beyond his own nose, nodded approval, though with a certain reserve, as he answered:

"It shall do well. But yet I do believe the origin and commencement of his grief sprung from neglected love." He was not going to give up his pet idea so easily, "Let his Queen mother all alone entreat him to show his griefs," he advised, "and I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear of all their conference. Should she fail to draw his confidence, to England send him, or confine him where your wisdom best shall think."

Meanwhile, Hamlet, intent on the subject of his father's murder, had, before this conversation with Ophelia, hit on a plan for making more sure of his uncle's guilt. He had misgivings lest the form he had seen was not truly his father, but an evil spirit assuming his shape and filling his mind with suspicious thoughts. Some players had just arrived at the Court, in whose acting Hamlet formerly took much delight. He sent for them, and asked if they would play a piece called "The Murder of Gonzalo," into which he would insert some dozen lines. They agreed gladly, and the performance was fixed for the following night, the King, Queen, and all the Court to be present.

To Horatio alone did Hamlet confide his plan. He bade his friend watch narrowly the face of the King while the play was being enacted, for in one scene the actors would repeat just what the ghost revealed had taken place in the orchard. "I, too," he added, "mine eye will rivet to his face, and after we will both our judgments join."

Seeing no ground for suspicion, the King and Queen both graciously consented to be present at the play. On taking their places the Queen invited Hamlet to come and sit at her side. But he refused, saying lightly:

"No, good Mother, here is metal more attractive." Placing himself near Ophelia, he spoke in light jesting tones, as though he had no recollection of their last meeting together. His madness seemed to have passed, or taken on another mood equally painful to poor Ophelia. She answered sadly:

"You are merry, my lord."

"Why should a man not be merry?" said Hamlet, his eyes not on Ophelia, but fixed on the faces of the royal pair where they sat together on the dais. "Look you how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within's two hours."

"Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord," corrected Ophelia.

"So long? " cried Hamlet mockingly. "Oh heavens! die two months ago and not forgotten yet? Then there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year!"

Then the actors entered and the play began. The story was of a duke named Gonzalo and his wife Baptista, who, as the play opened, declared her love for her husband to be so devoted she wished herself accurst if ever she married again. It was just the kind of thing Hamlet had often heard his mother say. He turned to her and asked her what she thought of the play. She answered uneasily that she thought the lady protested too much.

"Oh! but she'll keep her word!" cried Hamlet.

"Have you heard the play?" demanded Claudius suspiciously. "Is there no offence in't?"

"No, no, they do but jest," answered Hamlet; "poison in jest — no offence in the world," he assured his uncle.

"What do you call the play?" asked Claudius.

"The Mouse-trap," answered Hamlet, raising his voice so that all could hear. "This play is of a murder done in Vienna. Gonzalo is the Duke's name, his wife Baptista. You shall see anon; 'tis a knavish piece of work, but what of that? Your Majesty, and we that have free souls, it touches us not: let the galled jade wince, our withers are un-wrung. This is Lucianus," he went on, turning to Ophelia, "nephew to the duke."

Then, as the actor proceeded to play the part enacted by Claudius, Hamlet shouted excitedly, his eyes riveted on the guilty man:

"He poisons him i' the garden for 's estate. His name's Gonzalo. The story is extant and writ in choice Italian. You shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzalo's wife. . . ."

. . . But Claudius could bear no more. Livid with terror and rage, he staggered to his feet, calling for lights to be lit; he must away, he was ill.

"Give o'er the play! " shouted old Polonius; while the Queen and courtiers hastened to assist the King to his bedchamber.

Hamlet turned triumphantly to his faithful friend Horatio:

"Oh, good Horatio! I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound. Did'st perceive? Upon the talk of the poisoning?"

"I did very well note him, my lord," answered Horatio.

Presently two young courtiers, named Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who had been specially set to watch the mad Prince by his suspicious uncle, returned to inform Hamlet that the King was so wrathful that he was exceedingly ill.

Their solemn pompous manners, which he well knew covered mean and treacherous designs, irritated Hamlet.

"Your wisdom," he answered with mock politeness, " would show itself more by signifying this to his doctor. For me to put him to his purgation would perhaps plunge him into far more choler."

"Good, my lord," said Guildenstern, trying to wear a haughty mien; "put your discourse into some frame, and start not so wildly from my affair."

"I am tame, sir; pronounce," replied Hamlet in the same tone.

"The Queen, your mother, in most great affliction of spirit, hath sent me to you," said Guildenstern, trying a new tack.

"You are welcome," said the Prince, with mock politeness.

Guildenstern bit his lip with vexation, and his manner was more pompous and silly than ever as he answered:

"Nay, good my lord, this courtesy is not of the right breed. If it shall please you to make me a wholesome answer, I will do your mother's commandment; if not, your pardon, and my return shall be the end of my business."

"Sir, I cannot," replied Hamlet briefly.

"What, my lord? " inquired Guildenstern, blankly, having missed his own question among his labyrinth of words.

"Make you a wholesome answer," replied the Prince. "My wit's diseased; but such answer as I can make you shall command; or rather, as you say, my mother. Therefore, no more, but to the matter — my mother, you say?"

There was a look in Hamlet's face now that made the shallow courtier quail and shrivel. Rosencrantz stepped in with attempt to pour oil on the rising waters.

"Thus says the Queen, your behaviour hath struck her into amazement and admiration."

Hamlet replied to this obvious lie with his disconcerting sense of humour:

"Oh, wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother! But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration? Impart."

"She desires to speak with you in her closet ere you go to bed," answered the Rosencrantz, feeling rather faded.

"We shall obey were she ten times our mother," replied Hamlet, serious enough now as he thought of what that interview would be. "Have you any further trade with us?" he asked haughtily of the two messengers.

"My lord, you once did love me," ventured Rosencrantz cringingly; for he felt now, when too late, they had lost the Prince's favour, and their instructions were, as former friends of Hamlet, to obtain his confidence and betray him then to Claudius.

But Hamlet knew them for what they were. He answered the false friend with scorn:

"So I do still, by these pickers and stealers."

"Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper?" persisted Rosencrantz. " You do surely bar the door upon your own liberty if you deny your griefs to your friend."

"Sir, I lack advancement," answered Hamlet, thinking in vain how best to advance his plan of attack on the murderer of his father.

"How can that be when you have the voice of the King himself for your succession in Denmark?" said Rosencrantz, thinking he referred to his usurped kingdom.

"Ay, sir; but while the grass grows? " Then he turned on the pair with sudden indignation and told them straight what he thought of them for this base attempt to drive him into a toil, to pluck out the heart of his secret sorrow, to sound him from the lowest note to the top of his compass. But he was no pipe for their playing, he let them know. Though they could fret him, they could draw no sound from him. Discomfited and silenced at last, the two courtiers retired to report all to their master Claudius, and with him to plot the death of Hamlet.

Hamlet found his mother in great agitation about the play. She feared the wrath of Claudius would fall on the son she loved. So she began reproachfully:

"Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended."

He answered her sternly, indignant that she should dare refer to Claudius so:

"Mother, thou hast my father much offended."

"Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue," said the Queen impatiently.

"Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue," retorted Hamlet.

"Why, how now, Hamlet! Have you forgot me?"

She was always accustomed to respect and affection from her son.

Hamlet replied in a tone that alarmed her:

"No, by the rood, not so; you are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife; and — would it were not so! — you are my mother."

"Nay, then I'll set those to you that can speak," she answered angrily, moving towards the door.

But Hamlet seized her by the wrist and forced her to sit down, saying she should not budge till he had shown her her own inmost soul as in a glass.

Frightened by his stern manner and the report of his madness, Queen Gertrude cried out for help, fearing he might kill her.

Old Polonius, hiding behind the arras, echoed the cry: "Help, help, help!" and Hamlet, thinking it was the treacherous Claudius in hiding, and that now his chance of dealing justice on him had come, plunged his sword through the curtain, shouting as he did so:

"How now! a rat? Dead for a ducat — dead!"

A voice groaned out: "Oh, I am slain!"

Old Polonius had played the dangerous game of hiding behind curtains once too often.

"Oh me! what hast thou done?" cried the Queen, horror-struck.

"Nay, I know not," said Hamlet. "Is it the King?"

"Oh, what a rash and bloody deed is this!" She wrung her hands.

"A bloody deed!" cried Hamlet."Almost as bad, good mother, as kill a king and marry with his brother."

"As kill a king!" gasped his mother.

"Ay, lady, 'twas my word." He lifted the arras and dragged out the body of old Polonius, whom his sword had pierced through and killed. " Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool! " said Hamlet, looking at the dead man. "Farewell! I took thee for thy better."

Then he turned again to his mother, for he had no time to waste on old Polonius with such stern business before him.

"Leave wringing of your hands. . . sit you down and let me wring your heart," he said, "if it be made of penetrable stuff."

"What have I done that thou darest wag thy tongue in noise so rude against me?" she demanded nervously.

And then Hamlet, as he had threatened, held up the glass to her that she might see her conduct in all its hideous truth. He did not spare her, yet he spoke in such deep grief that she, his mother, whom once he had loved and honoured, could so have fallen that, instead of anger, he roused in her bitter shame and remorse.

"Oh, Hamlet!" she cried at last, "speak no more; thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul, and there I see such black and grained spots as will not leave their tinct!"

But Hamlet insisted on showing her the true picture of the man for whom she had betrayed his noble kingly father.

"A murderer and a villain — a slave — a cut-purse of the empire and rule, that from a shelf the precious diadem stole, and put it in his pocket — a king of shreds and patches!" he said, with righteous scorn.

And suddenly, while Hamlet was speaking, the dim, ghostly figure of his father stood again before him. Not clear and distinct as on the ramparts, when not only he, but Horatio and the officers of the guard, had seen him, but faint and shadowy. Hamlet was startled.

"What would your gracious figure?" he asked. "Do you not come your tardy son to chide?" For the dread command, he felt guiltily was not yet fulfilled.

To the Queen Hamlet appeared to be speaking with the empty air, and this convinced her more than ever of his disordered brain. She did not hear the low spirit voice which spoke alone to the listening ear of her son, bidding him not forget nor weaken in his undertaking, urging him also to continue fighting for his mother's weak and wavering soul.

"Alas! " she cried, "how is't with you that you do bend your eye on vacancy, and with the incorporal air do hold discourse! . . . Oh, gentle son, whereon do you look? "

"On him, on him!" cried Hamlet, surprised his mother was unable to see the spirit form. "Do you see nothing there?"

"Nothing at all," said the Queen; "and yet all that is I see," she added, trembling.

"Nor did you nothing hear?" asked Hamlet, in amazement.

"No, nothing but ourselves," replied his mother.

"Why, look you there!" cried Hamlet, pointing eagerly to the retreating figure; "look how he steals away — my father in his habit as he lived! Look where he goes, even now, out at the portal!"

But the Queen, since she had seen nothing, assured her son this was but the fever of his overwrought brain.

Then very quietly and earnestly he showed her he had no fevered pulse, no heated brow. He was cooler now, and calmer far than she herself.

"Mother, for love of grace," he begged her, "lay not that flattering unction to your soul, that not your trespass, but my madness, speaks. . . . Confess yourself to Heaven, repent what's past, avoid what is to come, and do not spread the compost on the weeds to make them ranker."

"Oh, Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain," wept the Queen, convinced in spite of herself, and overcome with remorse.

"Oh, throw away the worser part of it," answered her son, rejoicing in her tears of repentance, "and live the purer with the other half. . . . Good-night; and when you are desirous to be bless'd, I'll blessing beg of you. . . . I must be cruel only to be kind."

Then he bade her have nothing more to do with that base murderer Claudius, nor let him know of the secret things that had passed between them, nor that his madness was but feigned.

And the Queen, deeply moved, gave her promise.

"Be thou assured, if words be made of breath, and breath of life, I have no life to breathe what thou hast said to me."

Then Hamlet bade his mother again "good-night and farewell," for the King's order was to send him at once to England with his two former schoolfellows, Rosencrantz and Guildenstem — "whom I will trust," observed Hamlet grimly, "as I will adders fanged."

Going to where the body of old Polonius lay still upon the floor, he dragged him away.

"For this same lord I do repent," he said sincerely, and promised to see to the burial of Polonius, and to answer for his death.

Much sorrow for the man who had proved so faithless a servant to his father and himself, he could not pretend; his regret was that his had been the hand unknowingly to despatch him, for, after all, he was the father of Ophelia, his sweet love.

Chapter 3

The Queen kept her promise to her son. When Claudius sought to know what had passed, and where now was Hamlet, she assured him her poor son was "mad as the sea and wind when both contend in a storm." In proof of this she told how, hearing something stir behind the arras, he had whipped out his rapier, crying, "A rat! a rat!" and so by accident killed the "unseen good old man."

At this news Claudius quaked in his shoes.

"Oh, heavy deed!" he cried. "It had been so with us had we been there." In which surmise he was undoubtedly perfectly right. "Where is he now? " he asked nervously.

The Queen, whose one object was to protect her son, assured the King that even in his madness Hamlet's nature showed itself pure and noble, for he now wept for what he had done.

Claudius knew had his been the dead body these tears would have been but few. He felt he could feel not a moment's peace till Hamlet, mad or sane, was safe at sea, and he bade Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hurry their departure and start that same night, bearing with them a mandate to the English Court demanding that directly Hamlet set foot in England, he should, as a danger both to England and Denmark and the world in general, be put to death without delay. The slaying of old

Polonius now gave Claudius just the excuse he needed for banishing Hamlet. Gladly he would have put him to death then and there, but that he was a coward, and ever preferred crooked ways to straight ones, in all his dealings.

So that same night Hamlet found himself forced to set sail from Denmark, his vengeance still unaccomplished. But he determined not to be long absent, and to keep an eye on the two "fanged adders " sent with him.

Watching his opportunity one night, while they slept, he opened the mandate they bore from Claudius to the English Court. Therein he read of the treacherous design he had suspected. Quickly he hit on a plan by which not only he would escape, but a just retribution fall on the two "adders." Writing a new letter, he substituted for his own name that of the traitors Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; then sealed it with the royal signet of Denmark — his father's seal, which providentially he carried with him, the same Claudius had had copied for his own use. This letter, looking exactly like the other, and being folded in the same manner, the exchange was never suspected.

Two days later the ship on which they sailed was attacked by some pirates. During the fight Hamlet jumped into the sea and boarded the enemy's vessel; his own meanwhile made off, and left him to his fate. The pirates, on learning who Hamlet was, agreed, if he would do them a good turn in the future, to land him on the Danish coast. Directly his foot touched land, Hamlet sent for Horatio to join him, and dispatched a letter to Claudius announcing his return.

Meanwhile Laertes, the son of old Polonius, hearing of his father's death, had hurried back from France. Furious, he rushed to the Palace, and demanded the King to render an account of his father's mysterious death and hasty burial, which had lacked all due ceremonies and honours. For Claudius, fearing inquiry into the manner of old Polonius's death, had stowed him away,

as he confessed to the Queen, "in hugger-mugger" fashion, thereby exciting only the more talk.

Claudius soon succeeded in turning the wrath of Laertes from himself to Hamlet. He made out such a good case as to win Laertes completely over, and make him an easy tool in his cunning hands.

Another tragic calamity still further helped Claudius in his design, and added fuel to the fire of Laertes' hate. The sister he loved, the gentle Ophelia, had taken to heart so deeply her father's death, and, above all, his dying by the hand of Hamlet, that she had lost her mind with grief. All day she would wander in the woods alone, singing to herself songs of love and death, plucking the wild flowers, and giving them to passers-by.

Laertes had as yet heard nothing of his sister's sad state, when all at once, as he spoke to the King, there was a disturbance outside. Voices cried: "Let her come in!" and Laertes, to his dismay, beheld his sister Ophelia. She entered, without seeming to notice either the King or her brother. On her fair head was a wreath of wild flowers, and she trailed long branches with her. As in a dream she wandered round, singing a plaintive little ditty:

"They bore him barefaced on the bier,
Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny.
And on his grave rained many a tear."

"O heat, dry up my brains! Tears seven times salt burn out the sense and virtue of my eye! " cried Laertes in despair. "Oh, rose of May, dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia, is't possible a young maid's wits should be as mortal as an old man's life!" Then, gripping his sword, he cried: "By Heaven, thy madness shall be paid by weight, till our scale turns the beam."

Ophelia looked sadly into his face as she murmured:

"Fare you well, my dove!"

"Hadst thou thy wits and didst persuade revenge, it could not move me thus! " he cried in heartbroken tones.

But Ophelia did not even know her brother.

"There's rosemary," she said, as she gave him of her flowers. "That's for remembrance; pray you, love, remember. And there's pansies; that's for thoughts." And then she wandered on, singing to herself:

"And will he not come again?
No, no, he is dead.
Go to thy death-bed.
He never will come again.

"His beard as white as snow.
All flaxen was his poll;
He is gone, he is gone.
And we cast away moan:
God ha' mercy on his soul!"

"And of all Christian souls, I pray God," she added with a sigh as she went out. "God be with you."

Laertes's grief was just what the evil Claudius needed to serve his purpose. He desired a stanch supporter when the news of Hamlet's death, for which he trusted he had provided, should be divulged. Artfully he pretended to share his sorrow, assuring him of his great love for old Polonius, and friendship for himself, adding that "he who had slain Laertes's noble father, and caused his sister's melancholy madness, had also conspired against his own royal person."

Laertes inquired why the King had not punished such crime and treason with death. Claudius had two excellent special reasons with which to satisfy all such questions. Namely, because that the Queen, his mother, doted on Hamlet, and she herself was so necessary to the existence of Claudius he dared

not risk the loss of her favour. Also, that the people of Denmark bore to this same Hamlet such love and devotion they "dipped all his faults in their affection." Any arrows, therefore, sent against him would but revert on the sender's head.

"And so," cried Laertes, "I have a noble father lost, a sister driven into desperate terms.... But my revenge will come."

Even as he spoke a messenger arrived bringing Hamlet's letter.

Trembling, Claudius read:

"High and mighty, you shall know I am set naked on your kingdom. Tomorrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes, when I shall, first asking pardon thereon, recount the occasions of my sudden and more strange return.

"Hamlet."

So the plot had failed. Now was the time to use Laertes. He, on hearing of Hamlet's return, would have rushed to meet him, and with drawn sword demanded to be avenged of his father's death in straightforward combat. But Claudius, fearing that he might be suspected of instigating such a fight, persuaded Laertes it would be far better to disguise his wrath and challenge Hamlet to a seeming friendly encounter with foils. Hamlet being unsuspicious, it would be easy for Laertes during the contest to take up a weapon unbated, and with a poisoned point avenge his father's death. Yet "no wind of blame shall breathe, and even his mother shall call it accident," said Claudius.

Chapter 4

Horatio lost no time in going to the assistance of Hamlet, who had been cast destitute upon the shores of his own kingdom. Together they then journeyed with all haste to

Elsinore, Hamlet with his father's words ever sounding in his ear — "Remember me."

As they passed the churchyard at Elsinore they saw that a funeral was about to take place, and, wondering whose it might be, they stopped and questioned the grave-digger.

"What man dost thou dig this grave for?" inquired Hamlet.

"For no man, sir," replied the grave-digger.

"What woman, then?" said the Prince.

"For none neither," was the answer.

"Who is to be buried in it?" Hamlet persisted.

"One that was a woman, sir; but, rest her soul, she's dead."

"How long hast thou been a grave-digger? " asked Hamlet, interested to find a man of his calling with such a waggish tongue.

"Of all the days i' the year I came to 't that day our last King Hamlet o'ercame Fortinbras. . . the very day young Hamlet was born; he that is mad and sent to England."

"Ay, marry; why was he sent to England?" asked Hamlet.

"Why? because he was mad," replied the grave-digger, digging away with vigour; "he shall recover his wits there, or if he do not, 'tis no great matter there."

"Why?"

This grave-digger made Hamlet forget for a moment how sad a thing life was.

"'Twill not be seen in him there," replied the old man; "there the men are as mad as he."

Which assertion Hamlet never dreamt of disputing. He inquired instead: "How came he mad?"

"Very strangely," answered the grave-digger, shaking his head.

"How strangely? "

Hamlet wondered what his people said among themselves concerning his reported madness. But the old grave-digger answered shrewdly:

"Faith, e'en with losing his wits."

"Upon what ground?" persisted Hamlet.

“Why, here in Denmark."

There was nothing to be got out of this grave- digger, except indeed a ready wit and reply, whatever the question. Hamlet watched him as he dug among the ancient bones in the churchyard dust, all that remained of men who had once been great and powerful. What a little brief thing was this life; greatness and power and riches how fleeting! Even the great Alexander, conqueror of the world of his own day, died, was buried, and turned to dust, just like the poorest beggar. "The dust is of earth," he said, turning to Horatio, "of earth we make loam; and why of that loam might they not stop a beer barrel?

"Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away;
Oh, that that earth which kept the world in awe
Should patch a wall to expel the winter's flaw."

So much for earthly greatness! Yet men sold their souls for it, and committed even such base murders as had this Claudius.

And now the funeral procession from the castle came slowly in sight. Hamlet and Horatio stepped aside where, without themselves being seen, they could watch everything. The King and Queen and all the Court followed with the train of mourners; yet there was no music, no chaunting, no funeral rites. This signified, as both Hamlet and Horatio knew, that

though the person to be buried was of high estate, the death had been owing to suicide.

As the procession halted round the grave, Hamlet noted Laertes followed as chief mourner.

“That is Laertes, a very noble youth, mark," he said to Horatio, as Laertes, stepping forward, demanded of the officiating priest, a hard, sour-faced man, what further ceremony was to take place.

"No more can be done," replied the priest. "Her death was doubtful, and but that great command "-— he looked askance at the King and Queen — "o'ersways the order, she should in ground unsanctified have lodged. . . . We should profane the service of the dead to sing a requiem and such rest to her as to peace-departed souls."

"Lay her i' the earth," cried Laertes indignantly. "and from her fair and unpolluted flesh may violets spring! I tell thee, churlish priest, a ministering angel shall my sister be when thou liest howling."

At these words Hamlet's heart stood still. His sister! Then this sad, pitiful funeral, without music or prayer, was for Ophelia, once his own fair, sweet love.

The Queen stood over the open grave. Weeping, she threw in flowers.

"Sweets to the sweet," she sighed. "Farewell! I hoped thou should'st have been my Hamlet's wife; I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid, and not have strew'd thy grave."

"Oh, treble woe fall ten times on that cursed head whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense deprived thee of," cried Laertes in his grief, as he gazed on the pale, sweet face of his loved sister. "Hold off the earth awhile " — he waved aside the grave-diggers — "till I have caught her once more in mine arms."

So saying, he leapt into the open grave and cried on them to heap the earth above him too.

Then Hamlet rushed forward and leapt also into the grave. "This is I, Hamlet the Dane," he shouted, beside himself. "I loved Ophelia; forty thousand brothers could not, with all their quantity of love, make up my sum."

"The devil take thy soul!" cried Laertes, grappling with him fiercely.

"Thou prayest not well. I pr'ythee take thy fingers from my throat," said Hamlet, defending himself as best he could from this unexpected attack. The last person he desired to harm was the brother, of Ophelia, but he was forced to make a stand.

"Pluck them asunder," cried Claudius, fearing his prey might yet escape him. The Queen also implored her son to cease fighting. Horatio and the attendants parted them.

"What is the reason that you use me thus?" Hamlet demanded indignantly of Laertes. "I loved you ever."

Laertes gave no reply, and Hamlet, seeing that all looked coldly on him, left the churchyard, followed by his faithful friend Horatio.

Chapter 5

Hamlet was truly sorry to have forgotten himself with Laertes. He felt that in many ways they shared the same griefs, and he determined to apologize and make friends with him as soon as possible. When a messenger arrived, therefore, asking Hamlet whether he would accept a friendly challenge from Laertes to try an encounter with the rapier before the King and his Court, Hamlet agreed, though he had little desire for such a thing.

His sole object in life was to fulfil the ghost's command and deal vengeance on the evil Claudius; but how to carry this out he could not yet see. One thing he was determined — Claudius must die, and die soon, even though he had to slay him with his own hand. The Queen, his mother, was the great difficulty, for he desired to spare her all he could.

Claudius also desired to spare the Queen while killing her son, but he was more fertile in invention than Hamlet. Not only had he arranged that the foil of Laertes should be poisoned, but, in case of any accident to his plan, he prepared also a poisoned cup which he himself would hand to Hamlet, after first pretending to drink of it to his success. And to disarm all suspicion, Claudius laid a heavy wager on Hamlet's winning, though Laertes' fame as a swordsman when in France, had convinced Claudius that he was superior to Hamlet.

Horatio did not like the idea of this duel, backed by the false King. Hamlet, he could see, was averse to it, and he prophesied the Prince would lose, in spite of the fact of his well-known skill with the rapier.

"I do not think so," Hamlet answered him; "since Laertes went into France I have been in continual practice. I shall win at the odds. But," he added, "thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart — but 'tis no matter."

Whether he lost or won was nothing to him; he only accepted the challenge because, to refuse, would have been to slight Laertes.

Again Horatio tried to turn Hamlet from this so-called trial of skill.

*If your mind dislike anything, obey it," he urged; "I will go and say you are not fit."

But Hamlet refused to listen to him.

"We defy augury," he said; "there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come — the readiness is all. Since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes? Let be."

Before they began the encounter, Hamlet advanced to meet Laertes with hand outstretched in friendship, and words of generous apology:

"Give me your pardon, sir," he said. "I've done you wrong, but pardon it as you are a gentleman. This presence knows, and you must have heard, how I am punished with a sore distraction. . . . Sir, in this audience, let my disclaiming from a purposed evil free me so far in your most generous thoughts that I have shot mine arrow o'er the house and hurt my brother."

Laertes had once loved Hamlet, and had it not been for the poison instilled into his mind by that arch-poisoner Claudius, he must there and then have given up his treacherous design, which, indeed, was quite foreign to his nature. As it was, he made but a lame answer, though giving his hand in token that he accepted the proffered friendship of the Prince. Hamlet rejoiced to be again friends with Laertes, and called quite cheerfully for the foils, saying he would gladly now "play this brother's wager," and adding:

"I'll be your foil, Laertes; in mine ignorance your skill shall, like a star i' the darkest night, stick fiery off indeed."

But Laertes was in no spirit to enjoy a jest. This business he had undertaken was already repugnant to him. He answered coldly, as he took up the poisoned foil:

"You mock me, sir."

"No, by this hand," answered Hamlet earnestly.

"Set me the stoups of wine upon that table!" cried the King. "If Hamlet give the first or second hit, or quit in answer of the

third exchange, let all the battlements their ordnance fire; the King shall drink to Hamlet's better breath . . . Come, begin, and you, the judges, bear a wary eye."

In accordance with the King's instructions Laertes allowed Hamlet to get the better of him in the first round. The cannon were fired in his honour, and the King called loudly:

"Hamlet, here's to thy health! . . . Give him the cup."

But Hamlet answered, waving aside the proffered wine:

"I'll play this bout first; set it awhile."

Again they played, a serious game now, and the King began to fear that after all Hamlet was the better swordsman, and Laertes would get no chance even to prick him with the poisoned weapon. He watched them anxiously. Again Hamlet came off victor in the second round. The Queen was also watching anxiously. She noted that, in spite of his skill, Hamlet looked ill, and seemed short of breath and very hot. She, too, urged him to drink of the cup, and lifting it first to her own lips she called to him:

"The Queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet."

"Gertrude, do not drink! " cried Claudius, seizing the cup in sudden alarm. But it was too late. The Queen had taken a deep draught from the poisoned cup, and nothing now could save her he knew but too well.

"I dare not drink yet, madam," answered Hamlet; "by and by."

As they prepared for the third bout, Laertes whispered to Claudius, who he noticed had become deadly pale:

"My lord, I'll hit him now."

"I do not think it," answered Claudius. He felt disaster was closing in on every side.

"And yet," said Laertes to himself, as he handled the deadly foil, and looked at the man he had sworn to kill, " 'tis almost against my conscience." He hesitated.

"Come for the third, Laertes," cried Hamlet, eager to be finished with the contest. "You but dally. I pray you pass with your best violence. I am afraid you make a wanton of me." He saw well Laertes had not yet put forth his best skill.

"Say you so?" cried Laertes, with a sudden resolve not to weaken, as he remembered his dead father and sister. "Come on!"

And this time there was a deadly purpose in his play, and Hamlet found himself suddenly wounded by a naked point. Then he closed with Laertes, and in the scuffle Laertes dropped his weapon, and Hamlet, without noticing, picked it up in exchange for his own, and wounded, in his turn, Laertes. They fought now desperately, both bleeding.

"Part them!" cried the King. "They are incensed."

But Hamlet answered: "Nay, come again."

Just at that moment there was a cry which caused Hamlet to pause.

"Ho! look to the Queen."

The trembling King turned; but too late to save the Queen, who swayed and fell forward heavily.

"How does the Queen? " asked Hamlet, anxiously rushing to his mother's side.

"She swounds to see them bleed," stammered the King.

"No, no!" gasped the dying Queen; "the drink, the drink! Oh, my dear Hamlet! . . . The drink, the drink! I am poisoned." With this her head fell back. She was dead.

"O villainy!" shouted Hamlet, beside himself with grief and fury. "Ho! let the door be locked. Treachery! Seek it out."

In the tumult that followed Laertes staggered forward, and then fell, calling to Hamlet: "It is here, Hamlet." And as Hamlet bent over him he murmured: "Hamlet, thou art slain; no medicine in the world can do thee good. In thee there is not half an hour of life; the treacherous instrument is in thy hand, unbated and envenom'd. The foul practice hath turn'd itself on me. Lo, here I lie, never to rise again; thy mother's poisoned. I can no more — the King, the King's to blame."

"The point envenom'd, too? " cried Hamlet. "Then venom to thy work." And before the quaking Claudius could realize what was about to happen next, amid the cries of treachery and lamentations round the dead Queen, Hamlet, like an avenging fate, confronted him. Another moment and the poisoned weapon was driven straight home to the poisoner.

"Treason! treason!" cried all the courtiers, running away.

"Oh, yet defend me, friends!" gasped Claudius, in wildest terror. "I am but hurt."

Hamlet seized the poisoned cup; he would have no doubt upon this point.

"Here, thou murderous, damned Dane!" he cried, forcing the drink down the King's throat. "Drink of this potion. . . . Follow my mother."

So Claudius the poisoner died of his own poison, and as the dying Laertes said truly, "He was justly served."

"Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet," begged Laertes. "Mine and my father's death come not upon thee, nor thine on me."

"Heaven make thee free of it!" said Hamlet. "I follow thee,"

Then he turned to his faithful friend Horatio, and took farewell of him. Horatio would fain have died, too, with his beloved Prince; but Hamlet bade him live and tell this sad story, even as it happened, that all the world might know the truth.

So saying, Hamlet fell back dead in his friend's arms.

And Horatio, as he looked for the last time on the still face of Hamlet, took comfort, for, in place of anguish, melancholy, and unrest, he saw there a great calm and peace.

"Good-night, sweet Prince," he said; "may flights of angels sing thee to thy rest."

The Merchant of Venice

(Shakespeare)

Chapter 1

In the deep blue sea of the Adriatic lies the wonderful city of Venice. It is built on a hundred and seventeen small islands situated in a bay off the east coast of Italy, about two and a half miles from the mainland. The water flowing between these islands, forming as it were the streets, is called canals, and they are crossed by many hundreds of bridges, which unite the islands and make of the whole one city. Beautiful marble palaces are built on some of the islands, their carved fronts rising out of the water's edge; wonderful churches and galleries, full of the finest pictures and art-treasures, are on others; and gardens, markets, squares, and shops, with smaller houses for poor people, are found clustering together elsewhere. Instead of carriages and carts the Venetians use long, narrow boats called gondolas, which, since Venice ceased to be a powerful Republic in 1718, have always been painted black in token of mourning.

But years ago, some four hundred, when the story you now read took place, Venice was at the height of her glory and power, and from this sea-girt city sailed forth wonderful ships, like those beautiful vessels with great sweeping sails that we find in pictures of the Spanish Armada. And these magnificent-looking ships were loaded with all the riches and treasures of the then known world, for Venice was the great trading centre for all parts; and on the famous Rialto, the island devoted to the business of the city, met all the wealthy merchants of Venice and traders from everywhere, East and West.

Amongst the flowing mantles of rich brocade worn by the Venetians might be seen the long sober gaberdines of the Jews,

a people at that time much hated and despised, but who, notwithstanding the unjust persecution they suffered for their religion, managed to enrich themselves, and, because of their riches, became a certain power in any State who would let them live in tolerable security in the land. It is not much to be wondered at that the Jews returned the hatred with interest, and that when occasion offered they drove as hard a bargain, or got the better of any Gentile, as was possible. Hate breeds hate, and the Christians showed as little of their Master's spirit as did the Jews, who denied Him.

On one beautiful sunny day, when the white marble palaces were reflected in the dancing blue waters of the Adriatic, and the brightly-coloured gondolas, deftly rowed and steered by the standing oarsman at the bow, glided noiselessly along the shining waterways, Antonio, a very rich merchant, of grave and stately figure, met a friend of his, the young lord Bassanio, a bright, careless, handsome young fellow, whom Antonio loved like his life. Antonio had neither wife nor child, and in his lonely life Bassanio stood for everything.

Bassanio's usually cheerful looks were rather clouded, and he told his friend that he needed his help. This was not for the first time, and Antonio assured him he should have it. He then questioned him about a secret pilgrimage he had lately made.

"In Belmont is a lady richly left, and she is fair, and fairer than that word, of wondrous virtues!" answered Bassanio, drawing his arm through Antonio's, and speaking softly." Sometimes from her eyes I did receive fair speechless messages. Her name is Portia."

Bassanio explained that this lady's beauty, wealth, and wit brought many suitors to her house, and had he but the means to hold his own among them all, he hoped that he might be the fortunate one, so kindly had the lady looked on him. But for this journey he needed moneys, and he had nothing but debts.

Antonio told him that just at that moment all his ships were at sea, but that on his credit in Venice he could borrow money, and then should Bassanio hurry forth fitly equipped, to Belmont, to woo and win the fair Portia.

Bassanio joyfully accepted this good offer. A merchant of such standing as Antonio could have no difficulty in raising a loan. His name was as good as any bond.

So he hurried across the bridge which led to the Rialto, hoping to make an arrangement with some of Antonio's merchant friends.

The market-place was surrounded by colonnades, with fine paintings on the walls, and there also hung a large map, showing the route of the Venetian merchant ships all over the world. At one corner stood a church, the oldest in Venice, and on its wall was this inscription:

"Around this temple let the merchant's law be just, his weight true, and his covenant faithful."

For such was the standard set before the Venetian people; and that their laws were good and true for friend or alien was one of their proud boasts.

Bassanio found that, though Antonio's credit was as good as he thought it, everyone had not the ready money to lend, so at last he went where he knew there was plenty, and that was to old Shylock the Jew, one who was as well known on the Rialto as Antonio himself. He had, however, quite a different reputation. He was known to drive very hard bargains, and often had Antonio thwarted him in some dealing, by helping his creditor to get out of his clutches. Also, as he lent money easily, it prevented Shylock from raising the interest, so that Shylock hated this foolish, open-handed Christian, as he considered him; and Antonio, in a very high and mighty way, despised the cunning old Jew, and took no pains to hide his disdain.

Therefore, when Bassanio came to Shylock to ask to borrow money, and gave Antonio's name as security, Shylock stroked his long grey beard thoughtfully, and hummed and hawed a good deal. Not that he was unwilling, but he was considering if by any chance this might lead to his getting some revenge on Antonio.

The young lord who asked the favour, and whom he knew could only spend money with both silly open hands, he cared nothing for; but Antonio — that proud, scornful, wealthy Antonio!

"Three thousand ducats — well," he said slowly, when Bassanio had named that sum as the loan.

"Ay, sir, and for three months," answered Bassanio, who wanted the matter settled quickly.

"For three months — well" Again old Shy- lock stroked his beard slowly, and his keen dark eyes considered the eager young man, and his costly attire of velvet doublet and small embroidered cape.

"For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall be the bound," said Bassanio, wishing the old man would come to the point.

"Antonio shall become bound — well." Shy lock still stroked his beard.

"May you stead me? Will you pleasure me? Shall I know your answer?" Bassanio spoke impatiently.

Shylock granted that Antonio was a good man — he meant in point of money — but it was said in the Rialto that all his ventures were at sea: one ship gone to Tripolis, one to the Indies, another to Mexico, and one to England, and this was not safe, for the sea had many dangers. There were pirates, and perils of waters, winds, and rocks. Still, he thought he might take his bond.

"Be assured you may," Bassanio said quickly. He hated business matters. What a fuss the old Jew was making over a small sum like three thousand ducats!

At this moment Antonio joined them, and in answer to Shylock's low bow and "Rest you fair, good signior," given in very mock humility, Antonio spoke shortly and only to the point:

"Shylock, albeit I neither lend nor borrow, by taking nor by giving of excess, yet to supply the ripe wants of my friend I'll break a custom. Shall we be beholden to you?"

His tall, straight figure, clad in dark but very handsome garments, towered over the bent figure of the old Jew, whose long gaberdine was also of rich though sober material. He cared not to waste much money on outward show; he liked to feel it was safe in his money-bags, locked in a heavy iron chest. Antonio asked this favour, too, as if it were no favour, and he looked down on Shylock as though he were a worm.

Then Shylock raised his bent figure, and keen hate flashed from his eyes. His pride of race — a race older in civilization, in history, in culture, than these magnificent modern Venetians — gave dignity to his bent figure, and he answered with a sneer to match Antonio's scorn:

> "Signior Antonio, many a time and oft
> In the Rialto you have rated me
> About my moneys, and my usances.
> Still have I borne it with a patient shrug;
> For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe.
> You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog,
> And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine.
> And all for use of that which is my own.
> Well then, it now appears you want my help.
> Go to, then; you come to me and you say,

Shylock, we would have moneys.
What should I say to you? Should I not say
Hath a dog money? is it possible
A cur can lend three thousand ducats? or
Shall I bend low and in a bondsman's key,
With 'bated breath and whispering humbleness
Say this? —
Fair sir, you spit on me on Wednesday last;
You spurned me such a day; another time
You call'd me dog; and for these courtesies
I'll lend you thus much moneys? "

Old Shylock ended with outspread hands — thin hands with long fingers, that looked as though they could hold fast what they had.

But there was something pathetic in the old man's voice. Truly in those days to be born a Jew was to be born to hardship, though pride of race would have kept any Jew from wishing to be born anything else.

Antonio was not the least moved by either the voice or the argument; he answered coldly and haughtily:

"I am as like to call thee so again,
To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too.
If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not
As to thy friends, (for when did friendship take
A breed for barren metal from his friend?)
But lend it rather to thine enemy,
Who if he break, thou mayst with better face
Exact the penalty."

Then the cunning that oppression always develops made Shylock turn to the two friends as though he, too, would be a

friend, and treated as such. He said in all kindness he would make an offer: he would lend the money wanted, and ask no usury; merely as a merry jest Antonio should sign a bond that, if he paid not back on the day fixed, the forfeit should be a pound of his flesh, to be cut off and taken in what part of the body pleased his creditor.

Antonio laughed at this "merry jest," and said he would indeed seal such a bond, and say there was much kindness in the Jew.

But Bassanio hesitated. He liked not the terms, and Antonio should not seal such a bond for him.

"Why?" answered Antonio, "within two months — that's a month before this bond expires — I do expect return of thrice three times the value of this bond."

Shylock appeared hurt that Bassanio could think evil was meant by such a bond. What use would a pound of flesh be to him? Mutton, beef, or goats had more value. But if they liked it not he would be gone.

Antonio, however, bade him prepare the bond; he would certainly sign it. So Shylock hurried off to get the ducats, and arranged to meet them at a notary's and settle the matter.

"Hie thee, gentle Jew," Antonio called out after him. "This Hebrew will turn Christian; he grows kind."

"I like not fair terms and a villain's mind," said Bassanio, still doubtful.

"Come on," answered Antonio.

"In this there can be no dismay.
My ships come home a month before the day."

Chapter 2

About twenty miles away from Venice, on the mainland of Italy, at Belmont, dwelt the lady Portia. Her father had been a very rich man, and to his only daughter he left all his money and his beautiful house and park at Belmont. But, fearing that she might be wedded for the sake of her fortune — though, indeed, her own beauty and wisdom would have brought her many wooers without any other endowment — in his will he forbade her marriage until certain conditions had been complied with. These were, that before the fair Portia could accept, or even refuse, any suitor, he was to make his choice between three caskets. One was of gold, one silver, one lead; and when opened, the one chosen by the suitor would give him his answer — if the lady were for him or no; also might he never reveal which casket had proved the wrong one. A further condition, however, was to prove the kind of man the lover was, for he had first to solemnly swear that, should his choice not fall on the right casket, he would never more woo any lady for his wife. This last condition made many lovers forsake the quest altogether. They would fain wed the lovely and rich Portia, but, should they fail in the trial, they had no wish to mourn as sad bachelors for the rest of their lives.

Yet many become so enamoured of the lady, that even this last condition they were willing to accept, for the chance of winning her, and Portia had to allow them the choice; and whether she loved or whether she did not, she bound herself to abide loyally by her father's will.

Sometimes to her companion Nerissa, a dark merry maiden, whose light heart helped to cheer her home, she lamented that for her there was no choice; but as Nerissa counted over the lovers, she would join in her mirth, and dismiss them all with a merry laugh, feeling thankful when they departed from her house without accepting the trial. There was only one name that

made her heart beat faster. Nerissa, with a shrewd look, reminded her lady of a certain young noble from Venice, a soldier, who had come in company with a Marquis who had wooed and lost her; he, said Nerissa, was the best deserving a fair lady that ever her foolish eyes had looked on.

"Yes, yes — it was Bassanio," answered Portia, with a bright smile; and then, as though she would cover her quick remembrance of the handsome young soldier's name, she added indifferently: "I think so was he called."

Nerissa quite understood whom her lady would wish to choose the right casket.

But other lovers were knocking at her door, and the Prince of Morocco, with his half-regal suite, petitioned to be allowed the choice that would make him the most blessed, or most curst, among men.

At Portia's order a curtain was drawn at the end of a magnificent room where she received her suitors, and there were displayed the three caskets.

Portia pointed to them saying:

"The one of them contains my picture, Prince. If you choose that, then I am yours withal."

The Prince took up the small leaden box first; on it ran the inscription:

"Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath."

He turned away from that, for lead, he said, he would not hazard anything. Then he looked at the silver box; on it was written:

"Who chooseth me shall get as much as he deserves."

And over that saying he paused, for truly he felt he did deserve the lady; he was rich and young and nobly born, and in

love he was anyone's equal. But he glanced to see what legend the gold casket bore, and there he read:

"Who chooseth me shall gain what many men desire."

That determined him — the world desired the fair Portia, gold was her worthy setting.

"Deliver me the key," he cried. "Here do I choose and thrive I as I may."

He opened the golden casket and horror seized him; inside lay no fair portrait, but a skull and a paper containing these words:

> "All that glitters is not gold:
> Often have you heard that told.
> Many a man his life has sold,
> But my outside to behold. . . .
> Fare you well; your suit is cold."

There was no help for it, nor anything further to be said. In deep dejection he made his farewell bow, and left. Portia sighed with relief. Another danger past. Oh, why had her father so willed it, that she could neither choose one nor refuse none!

And then she thought on that young Venetian, and considered. It was a long time since he had come with the Marquis, and he had not asked to choose.

But Bassanio was not the next who came to try his luck. Portia had again to allow the caskets to be shown, and to await with beating heart what the result might be.

The Prince of Arragon desired to be allowed the choice, and as he entered the grand hall, it would appear from his bearing that he came as a victorious conqueror.

He dismissed the leaden box as beneath his notice, and the golden one, "what many men desired," was not for him; he would not jump with common spirits! Over the silver

inscription he bent long, "to get as much as he deserved." That was well said; he undoubtedly had the stamp of merit. "Give me the key for this, and instantly unlock my fortunes here," he cried; and the servant gave him the silver key.

Alas for his pride! the portrait inside was none of Portia's, but of a blinking idiot, and the scroll told him to "begone," for he was sped.

"What's here? " he cried indignantly. " Did I deserve no more than a fool's head? Is that my prize? Are my deserts no better?"

But there was no use in being angry; he was bowed out, and again Portia breathed freely.

What! another wooer? The servant entered hurriedly.

A young Venetian came to herald his lord's approach. Gifts of rich value had he bestowed on all; he was indeed a likely ambassador of love! the servant was loud in his praise.

From Venice! Portia turned to Nerissa.

> "Come, come, Nerissa; for I long to see
> Quick Cupid's post that comes so mannerly."

Nerissa, little guessing that for her also this meant a "Cupid's post," whispered aside with a smile:

"Bassanio, lord Love, if thy will it be."

Chapter 3

Before we follow Bassanio's fortune with the caskets and the fair Portia, we must return to Venice and see how things had sped with Antonio and the Jew.

After the "merry bond" had been signed at the notary's, Shylock was in great good-humour, and had accepted Bassanio's invitation to sup that night with him and his friends.

This for him was a very unusual thing to do; he had at first said to Bassanio that he would "buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following; but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you." However, the bond having so greatly pleased him, he went home to see to the safety of his house, while he went out to supper.

Shylock had one daughter, a lovely girl called Jessica, and he guarded her as jealously as he did his ducats. He was never quite at ease when away from either, and his servant, a good-natured but rather lazy Christian called Launcelot, had just left his service and gone to that of Bassanio. So he charged Jessica that night to lock up the doors, and shut the casements, nor climb up and thrust her head into the public street, but to stay within and keep all safely locked. He was loath to go, for he had dreamt of money-bags that night, and that might mean some ill brewing for him.

Launcelot, who, as his new master's servant, came to bid his old master not forget the supper party, told him not to delay, for there was to be fine doings and a masque.

"I am not bid for love," growled Shylock, "they flatter me; but yet I will go in hate to feed upon the prodigal Christian."

Launcelot had whispered aside to Jessica while giving her a note:

> "Mistress, look out at window for all this.
> There will come a Christian by
> Will be worth a Jewess' eye."

Had Shylock heard him, nothing would have moved him from his house that night; but he did not know what was inside his pretty daughter's head, and that it was not as possible to lock up a beautiful young girl as it was to guard ducats.

When her father had gone Jessica looked after him, but with no sadness, for indeed she had found home with him no better than a prison; she shook her head and said softly:

"Farewell, and if my fortune be not crossed,
I have a father, you a daughter, lost."

She knew well what Launcelot meant when he spoke of a Christian coming by. It was not for the first time that she held a little note safely in the bosom of her dress, nor for the first time that, bending from her window, or in the seclusion of the little walled-in garden, she had listened to the Christian's wooing. The handsome young Lorenzo had seen the Jew's daughter and loved her at once, and at last he had persuaded her to leave her father's home and her father's religion, and to "become a Christian and his loving wife."

To Jessica it was as though he had opened prison-gates for her, and knowing that her father would rather see her dead than wedded to a Christian, she had determined to run away and be happy with Lorenzo.

This was the very night on which she had arranged to escape; her disguise, that of a page-boy, lay hidden in her own room; all the jewels she possessed were in the pockets; and when her father gave her his keys, she unlocked his money-drawers and took out some bags of ducats — she would not go empty-handed to her lover.

As the evening grew dark, she dressed herself in her page's suit, and at a half-open window she listened for the sound of the merry party which Lorenzo would bring masked and disguised. It had been arranged that she should join the party as his torch-bearer, and afterwards they would escape by gondola from Venice.

Her heart beat fast as she sat there waiting and listening; then came the sound of voices, and at last his voice, Lorenzo's.

She looked down on the narrow street that ran at the back of the house; on the front the quiet waters glittered darkly under the stars, and the gondola, tied to its brightly coloured post, rocked gently. But they had arranged to meet and escape where there was the least chance of neighbouring eyes espying them, and as a boy she could pass where she would with the merrymaking throng — no one would guess that the dark-haired page was the lovely Jessica, daughter of rich old Shylock the Jew.

So Lorenzo and his party of friends passed laughing and jesting out of the narrow street to join the merrymakers at Bassanio's supper party, and bearing a torch and keeping very near Lorenzo, Jessica left behind her forever her father's gloomy house.

There was much talk next morning on the Rialto, where not only business, but all news, was freely discussed. Some tidings made men look sad: Antonio had lost a ship, a richly laden ship, wrecked on the dangerous flat called the Goodwins, off the coast of England. Another messenger said that was not the last of his losses; storms had been very prevalent, and there were rumours of further wrecks. Antonio was much beloved, and many knew of his bond with the Jew, though they did not regard the penalty as anything but a jest.

Then there was the report of the flight of Shylock's daughter with Lorenzo; over that no one seemed to grieve, and when the old man came on the scene, they laughed at his trouble.

He was distraught with anger as much as sorrow, and whether he mourned more over the loss of his ducats or his daughter it were hard to say.

"My daughter! Oh, my ducats! Oh, my daughter!" he cried out. "Fled with a Christian? Oh, my Christian ducats! Justice! the law! my ducats and my daughter! A sealed bag — two sealed

bags of ducats! Of double ducats, stolen from me by my daughter!"

So on he raved, and only paused to find comfort when he heard of Antonio's losses.

"I am very glad of it," he told his friend Tubal, a Jew. "I'll plague him, I'll torture him; I am glad of it."

He rubbed his hands gleefully, but quickly remembered his daughter and his ducats, and the failure of all his attempts to have her followed and brought back, with the jewels and the ducats; but no mercy would he show a Christian after this theft by a Christian.

"I'll have the heart out of him. If he forfeit, let him look to his bond."

Revenge was now his one thought — he had been wronged, he would be revenged.

Chapter 4

Bassanio, obeying his friend Antonio's kind injunction to make no hurry over his love-making, and not to let the thought of business or the merry bond with the Jew disturb his mind, passed the long summer days very happily in the company of the fair Portia, becoming more and more in love with her each succeeding day, and allowing himself to hope that she was not averse to his presence; that she, too, found the days pass all too swiftly, and though she might not say "Yes" or "No," she bade him stay, even for a month or two, for if he chose wrong then she would lose his company. She might not, however, teach him to choose rightly, for then would she be forsworn, and that she would never be.

Portia's eyes were soft when she looked at the young Venetian, and they told her secret, though her tongue sought to hide what as yet she did not dare confess.

Nerissa might have found the time hang heavily for her while her lady talked and walked and thought of no one but this favoured lover; but she, too, had a very agreeable companion in the young gentleman who attended Bassanio, called Gratiano, and he persuaded her to promise that should his lord win her lady by right choice of the casket, she would follow Portia's example, and be married to him on the same day that saw them a happy couple.

So passed the time, and at last Bassanio, impatient to know his fate, entreated the lady Portia to allow him his choice. "For as I am," he cried, "I live upon the rack."

"Away, then," said Portia; "I am locked in one of them. If you do love me, you will find me out."

She ordered soft music to sound as the curtains were withdrawn, and waited to see how this lover would fare; would he, too, have to make his bow and depart without further delay as the others had done? Then she had sighed with relief; now — now she dared hardly to think of anything so awful as Bassanio's opening the wrong casket.

Bassanio stood before the table studying the three boxes — the gold, the silver, the lead, with their three inscriptions. Surely there he might find a clue for his right guidance.

Gold? Nay, would not that be to trust to outward show?

Silver? Was not that the common exchange between man and man? He would none of them. But lead? That seemed rather to threaten than to promise — to dare, rather than to entice; yes, lead it should be.

"Here choose I! " cried Bassanio. "Joy be the consequence."

And joy was the consequence, for inside the box lay the fair portrait of fair Portia, so cunningly painted that the lips seemed to move, the eyes to speak, and on the folded scroll was written:

"You that choose not by the view,
Chance as fair, and choose as true!
Since this fortune falls to you.
Be content and seek no new.
If you be well pleased with this
And hold your fortune for your bliss.
Turn you where your lady is,
And claim her with a loving kiss."

Bassanio needed no second bidding; he turned to his fair lady, and kissing her, took her hand, saying that until she assured him all was true, he could hardly believe so great good-fortune was his.

And Portia, with both hands, and tears of joy in her eyes, gave him all that he could ask — herself, her house, her fortune — only wishing, for his sake, that she were more beautiful, more rich; and as a sign of her love she gave him a ring from her finger, a quaint and precious ring, bidding him never part with it, or lose it, lest it should injure their love.

Bassanio vowed that never, while life lasted, should that ring part from his finger.

Nerissa and Gratiano came forward to congratulate the happy pair, and then announced their compact, begging that they might be married on the same day. Nerissa also gave a ring to her lover, and he swore that he too would keep it for ever.

In the midst of all this happy excitement some visitors were announced — Solanio, a gentleman from Venice, came to see Bassanio, and with him were Lorenzo and his wife Jessica, who had been travelling about in Italy, and being near Belmont had

joined Solanio on his visit, longing to hear how Bassanio's fortunes had sped.

Portia, for Bassanio's sake, gave them all a most kind welcome, and while she talked to the sweet-looking Jessica, she noticed that the letter Solanio had given Bassanio made him turn pale, and a look of great grief banished all joy from his face.

She entreated to share with him the trouble that the letter had brought.

"O sweet Portia," he cried, "here are a few of the unpleasantest words that ever blotted paper; "and reminding her of the friend of whom he had told her, and of his kind loan of money, he now explained the condition under which that money had been borrowed, and that the bond was forfeit, for loss upon loss had bankrupted the rich Antonio; he had not repaid the loan to Shylock, and the three months were past.

"But is it true, Solanio?" he asked again; "have all his ventures failed? not one vessel escaped the dreadful touch of merchant-marring rocks? "

Solanio shook his head. "Not one." And the Jew refused now to take the money which Antonio's friends would raise. He demanded of the Duke that justice should be done, and he be granted his bond.

Portia asked what sum was owed, and hearing it was but three thousand ducats she bade Bassanio take twice that sum — nay, double that and treble that — and hasten without delay to his true friend, and having released him, to return with all speed and bring Antonio with him.

So Bassanio and Gratiano hurried off with Solanio, leaving Jessica and her Lorenzo to keep Portia company.

But no sooner had they gone than Portia called to Nerissa and said it was her intention to be in Venice as soon as Bassanio: she had a plan. She requested Lorenzo and Jessica to stay and

manage for her her house until she should return, for she had made a vow, she told them, to go and live in prayer and contemplation, until her lord's return, and only Nerissa was to accompany her.

She then despatched a messenger, one whom she could trust as both honest and quick, and he was to take a letter to a cousin of hers in Padua, a learned doctor of the law, Bellario, and bring to her with utmost speed what he should be given, meeting her at the ferry which trades to Venice.

Then in the coach with Nerissa she unfolded to her her plan.

Chapter 5

The Duke had at last yielded to Shylock's urgent appeal that justice, the just and sure law of Venice that might not for anyone or any cause be turned aside, should be meted out between him and Antonio, and that as Antonio had failed to keep his side of the bond within the three months, so now the forfeit of that bond — the "merry jest," as he had called it, three months back — should be paid: one pound of flesh cut from Antonio's body near the heart.

All Venice was excited over this trial. Could it be? would the Duke allow it? would the Jew really get his pound of flesh?

"Yes," said all the learned heads. "It was a bond; the law could not be altered, it must be respected; not even the Duke might change the law."

So the great Court of Justice was crowded on the morning of the trial. The Duke and the Magnificoes of Venice, all in their robes of state, sat on a raised dais in solemn, stately grandeur, and at a long table sat the clerks and registrars, all prepared to see that justice was done — even to a Jew, for the sake of the honour of Venice, Antonio was there, pale but calm, standing between two gaolers; Bassanio and Gratiano were there, with

the heavy money-bags Portia had sent; and the friends and fellow-merchants of Venice thronged in, to see what might be the ending of this strange trial. A little apart stood Shylock alone, for no other Jew would so far befriend him as to appear with him in such a case; but he wavered not, though well aware of the looks of hatred cast in his direction, and the muttered curses that greeted him. He stood alone, grim and determined, and his hand passed quietly over the edge of the knife that was stuck in the broad band of his robe. He had Antonio, one of his enemies, in his power — one of those who had insulted him, spat on him, taken from him his daughter, and many of his precious ducats! Now it was his turn, and he cared for nothing, nothing in heaven or earth, but one thing, and that was his revenge.

The Duke rose, and looked with sorrow at Antonio, with sternness on the Jew. Then he spoke to Shylock; surely he had been misleading them all? He had carried the matter so far to show his power; now he would show his pity — he would never exact the penalty! "We all expect a gentle answer, Jew," he ended, with an entreaty in his voice.

Shylock, looking out of dark, deep-set eyes, smiled a little grimly at the Duke's speech, and answered "that by the holy Sabbath he had sworn to have his bond, and that he held his Grace to it, to see that the charter of the city was not broken, but that justice was done."

Bassanio interrupted him eagerly:

"For thy three thousand ducats here are six."

"If every ducat in six thousand ducats were in six parts, and every part a ducat, I would not have them. I would have my bond." So Shylock answered, and Bassanio drew back with a sigh of despair to his dear friend's side. How could he ever be happy again, even with his beloved Portia, when the bond made for him had brought this disaster to Antonio?

"How shalt thou hope for mercy, rendering none?" asked the Duke.

"I stand for judgment," said Shylock. "Answer; shall I have it?"

The Duke paused. He had been waiting for a learned doctor of law from Padua, the great seat of learning in those days, to whom he had sent to see if by any chance some other light could be thrown on the matter, and at that moment a young man, in the long black cloak of a lawyer's clerk, was ushered in, who brought a letter from the doctor Bellario.

The Duke read it, and then told the Court that the learned doctor for whom he had sent wrote that he was ill, but in his place had come a young doctor of Rome, whose name was Balthasar. He had been made acquainted with the case between the Jew and the merchant, and together they had consulted many learned books. He brought Bellario's opinion, bettered with his own great learning, for never had been known so young a body with so old a head, and so he left him to his Grace's acceptance.

The Duke looked up relieved. Was it possible there was a way out of the horrible cutting of that pound of flesh?

"You hear the learned Bellario, what he writes; and here, I take it, is the doctor come," he announced.

The young clerk had gone out, and now returned with his master, as young apparently as himself, but clad in all the dignity of the full red robes of a doctor of law.

The Duke received him with respect, and bade him take his place at the head of the table. His clerk by his side opened his leathern box and drew out closely written notes, and learned-looking documents.

Every eye in the court rested on that fair young doctor in his brilliant-coloured gown, who faced the Court with such calm

dignity. He seemed scarcely more than a boy, and yet Bellario had spoken of his great learning. Antonio sighed. He knew he was doomed, and wished that there need be no more talk, but that the Jew should have his will and end the dismal scene. Bassanio wondered if there could be any hope. Shylock was unmoved; he knew the law, and he would have his bond for all the Dukes or learned doctors in Venice.

The young doctor looked round the court as though to learn the people present. In a calm, low voice, that yet everyone could hear, he asked which was Antonio, which the Jew? Then, acknowledging that as Antonio confessed the bond, the law of Venice could not prevent his forfeit, he turned to Shylock: "Then must the Jew be merciful," he said.

"On what compulsion must I? tell me that!" cried Shylock wrathfully.

The Court was hushed as the young doctor spoke of mercy that falls from heaven with a blessing like to that of gentle rain; mercy that blesses him that gives as much as him that takes; mercy that seasons justice; mercy for which we pray, and so are taught to give what we do need.

As he spoke, in that gentle but firm voice, everyone listened in thrilled silence. This was a new note in the stern Law Courts, but it rang true. Ah! surely the Jew must yield!

But Shylock continued to demand the " penalty of his bond." Bassanio again offered money, and more money — "ten times o'er, on forfeit of his hands, his head, his heart"; and if not, surely the learned doctor could for once wrest the law, "and to do a great right do a little wrong, and curb this cruel devil of his will."

"It may not be," said the young doctor gravely. "There is no power in Venice can alter a decree established."

Shylock heard this decision with joy. He called him a "wise young judge," " a Daniel come to judgment."

With a strange look the young judge turned on him, and asked to see the bond, and willingly Shylock handed it to him, while all the Court waited in deep dejection. There was, then, no remedy, no hope to save Antonio from the Jew's cruel knife? Bassanio clasped his friend's hand. Ah! to save him he would give up the woman he loved so dearly — sacrifice her, life and everything, could he but save his friend.

The young judge eyed him curiously. "What would the lady say could she hear that?" he asked; and when Gratiano protested that he, too, could wish his love in heaven if it would save Antonio. The young clerk raised his head from his notes, and remarked that it was as well he said that behind her back, or it might make an unquiet house.

Then, carefully considering the bond, the young judge addressed Shylock. A pound of the merchant's flesh was his — Shylock drew his knife from his band — yes, and he might cut that pound from his breast, nearest his heart. The law allowed it, and the Court awarded it.

Shylock approached Antonio, and all the revenge and hatred of months and years past glittered in his eyes and rang in his voice.

"Most learned judge!" he cried triumphantly. "A sentence! Come, prepare!"

The young judge raised his hand. "Tarry a little; there is something else." A tremor rang through the court; one might have heard a pin drop. "This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood," he continued. "The words expressly are: a pound of flesh. Then take thy bond — take thou thy pound of flesh; but in the cutting of it, if thou dost shed one drop of Christian blood, thy lands and goods are by the laws of Venice confiscate unto the State of Venice."

He paused, and Shylock started back aghast. The Court could hardly restrain a cheer, and Gratiano shouted:

"O upright judge! Mark, Jew — a learned judge!"

"Is that the law?" asked Shylock hoarsely, trembling all over at so sudden a turn in the course of events.

Sternly the judge said that he could see the Act for himself, and that as he wanted justice, he should have it — more than he desired.

"I will take his offer, then; pay the bond thrice, and let the Christian go." Baffled and angry, but seeing the fatal error in his "merry bond," Shylock wished now to seize the money and get away from this crowd of jeering, hating eyes.

Bassanio, too relieved for words, sprang up to give him the money-bags; but again the young judge raised his hand.

"Soft; the Jew shall have all justice — soft, no haste; he shall have nothing but the penalty." And he then challenged Shylock to take his pound of flesh, but shed no blood, neither cut anything but a pound, no more, no less; for the turn of a hair in the scales would result in his sentence to death and confiscation of all his goods.

Terror gazed from Shylock's eyes. No blood; no more, no less, than a pound! It was not possible! Oh, what a badly thought-out bond had he made!

He asked for his money back, and only that, and leave to go.

But the law he had craved for now held him, not his victim, fast; and that wise young judge, who had prayed him to show mercy, now showed him justice. He had conspired against the life of a citizen — he, an alien, and there again the law held him. The party against whom he had so conspired could seize half his goods, the other half was taken by the State, and his life itself lay at the mercy of the Duke. "Down, therefore, and beg mercy of the Duke."

Shylock stood as though frozen to a statue — the most utterly hopeless, broken old man, yet with a grim dignity that his hatred still lent him.. He would not bend his knee to ask for mercy; he had been trapped by his own unheeding hands; he would die, but never ask for mercy.

The Duke rose with a feeling of pity for even that despised old Jew; he pardoned his life before he asked it, and turning to Antonio, he asked him what mercy he would show, now that the tables were turned.

Antonio, grave and reserved now as during the terrible trial that had threatened his life, begged the Duke to confiscate but half the Jew's goods, to decree that Shylock should leave all his money to the gentleman that lately stole his daughter, and that he himself should forthwith become a Christian.

This last clause was perhaps not so unkind as it sounds, for the Christians of that day thought no un-baptized person could ever possibly enter heaven; so Antonio may have imagined he was forcing the Jew to that action for his own good.

The young judge then asked Shylock: "Art thou content, Jew? What dost thou say?"

Shylock, with what feelings we may well imagine, answered: "I am content." And as the deed of gift was to be drawn out, he turned to the Duke, and in a low voice said: "I pray you give me leave to go from hence; I am not well. Send the deed after me, and I will sign it."

So he left the court a broken old man, ruined and bitter; for what mercy Antonio and the Duke had shown him seemed to him but cruel kindness, and henceforth he could but seek some corner in which to hide himself until death released him from a world he hated.

The rest of the people present were full of rejoicing and praises of the learned young judge, who had so cleverly turned

the tables. The Duke asked him to come back with him to dinner, and Bassanio pressed on him the three thousand ducats prepared for the Jew; but all offers the young judge courteously declined. He had to leave that very day for Padua, he said, and he was well paid in that he was well satisfied to have delivered his client. When Bassanio still urged the acceptance of some gift, some remembrance, he suddenly turned, and, pointing to the ring Bassanio was wearing — the very one given him by Portia — said that, since he urged it, and for his love, he would take that ring, but nothing else.

Bassanio drew back. He could not part with the ring; he had vowed to his lady it should never leave his hand.

The young judge looked offended. Bassanio had taught him to beg, and now he denied him what he asked. With a grave bow to the gentlemen he left the court.

Antonio turned to Bassanio, and entreated him to let the ring be given, for his love's sake. Surely he could explain how it happened to Portia; she would forgive him. Then quickly Bassanio gave it to Gratiano, asking him to run after the judge with the ring, and so satisfy him.

Gratiano caught up with the young clerk, whose interest in the trial and busy taking of notes he had so admired, and before he knew it that young clerk had made him give up his ring, too — the ring Nerissa had made him vow never to part with on his life.

The next morning Bassanio, with his dear Antonio, and Gratiano all left for Belmont, impatient to be with their lady-loves, and to tell them the good news.

Chapter 6

In the beautiful garden at Belmont the moon shone down on a very happy couple. Jessica and Lorenzo wandered round

enjoying the sweet smell of flowers borne on the gentle night breeze, and they talked of other lovely nights such as this, when other lovers had met, but none more loving or more happy than themselves. A messenger hurried to them saying that the lady Portia might be expected at any moment; so ordering that music should be made to greet her, they waited on a bank enjoying the sweet strains.

Portia and Nerissa, leaving their coach at the gate, stole softly into the garden, very glad to be back before their lords, and Portia asked Jessica and Lorenzo not to mention that they had been absent, for she heard that Bassanio and his friends were just arriving.

Very soon, indeed, the moonlit garden saw more united lovers; Bassanio in great joy to be again with his beloved Portia, and eager to introduce to her his friend Antonio.

While Portia was making him very welcome, Nerissa had been talking to her Gratiano, and at once noticed that he no longer wore the ring she had given him.

They all turned to hear Gratiano excuse himself. The ring was of no value, and he gave it to the judge's clerk, who begged it of him for a fee; he had not the heart to deny it him.

Nerissa very indignantly said what mattered the value? he had sworn to wear the ring till the hour of death. And then she tossed her pretty head disdainfully — a poor excuse, indeed! She was certain that clerk would never wear hair on his face!

Portia also took up the matter seriously. Gratiano was to blame for so lightly parting with his ring, after his many promises. She had given her love a ring, and he had sworn never to part with it, and sure she was he never would do so. Indeed, Nerissa had good cause for complaint.

As may be imagined, Bassanio was very uncomfortable on hearing this, and felt it were almost better to cut off his hand,

and swear he lost the ring with it! But Gratiano blurted out the truth, saying Bassanio had given his ring to the young judge, who had well deserved it too!

On hearing this Portia was very angry, and to all that Bassanio could urge in self-defence, she gave no heed, saying his false heart must be void of truth, and that doubtless Nerissa was right; he had given the ring to no man, but to some woman.

Bassanio, quite distracted, swore by the blessed stars that the young judge who had so cleverly saved his friend had persisted in begging the ring, and had Portia been there he believed she would herself have urged him to give it up to so deserving a judge.

For all Portia's apparent anger, there was a suspicion of a smile breaking through her frown; and the naughty little Nerissa turned aside frequently to hide a laugh, though she appeared more indignant with Gratiano than ever.

Antonio, very grieved to be in some sort of way the cause of this quarrel between such dear friends, protested to Portia, in his grave manner, that he would give his soul as forfeit, as once he had done his body, that his friend would never again break faith.

Portia drew a ring from her finger, and told Antonio to give it to Bassanio, and that he should be his surety.

Bassanio started with surprise; the ring offered him was the same one he had given the judge — it was so old and curious that there was no mistaking it.

Portia acknowledged calmly that such was the case, the judge was a friend of hers.

Nerissa, saying the learned doctor's clerk had also given his ring back to her, handed it to Gratiano.

And while bewilderment and displeasure perplexed both the lovers, Portia burst into a happy laugh, which Nerissa quickly echoed.

"You are all amazed," she said. "Here is a letter; read it at your leisure. It comes from Padua from Bellario. There you shall find that Portia was the doctor; Nerissa there his clerk. Lorenzo here shall witness I set forth as soon as you, and but e'en now returned. I have not yet entered my house."

"Were you the doctor, and I knew you not? " asked Bassanio, eagerly taking her hands and looking in her face; while Gratiano caught hold of Nerissa. "Were you the clerk?"

They all laughed for joy, and could hardly believe they had been so blind, so deceived.

And to make things even more joyful, Portia handed letters she had brought with her for Antonio, telling him that, after all, news of three of his ships had come to hand — they had weathered the storms which had been supposed to have wrecked them.

For Lorenzo, too, there was good news, which Nerissa gave him with the deed made out by Shylock, that after his death all his money should come to him and Jessica.

Portia looked round, and behold the stars were dying out in the paling sky, and from the east shafts of golden light announced the coming of morning. The birds stirred and dropped little notes, saying "Good-morning" as they ruffled their feathers and thought of the early worm. The breeze moved and the flowers shook their bright heads; the sun restored to them their colours, and they sent out sweet scents to greet his rising.

"It is almost morning," said Portia. "Let us go in."

And so to breakfast — while Gratiano, holding Nerissa's hand, announced with his merry laugh:

> "Well, while I live I'll fear no other thing
> So sore as keeping safe Nerissa's ring."