

Stories from Ballads

CLASSIC LIT FOR YOUNG READERS

MARY MACGREGOR

Stories from
Ballads

Mary MacGregor

Libraries of Hope

Stories from Ballads
Classic Literature for Young Readers

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Contents

About This Book.....3
The Young Tamlane 7
Hynde Etin 27
Hynde Horn 43
Thomas the Rhymer.....68
Lizzie Lindsay 93
The Gay Goshawk.....117
The Laird o' Logie 134

Stories from
Ballads

Told to the Children by
MARY MACGREGOR

With Pictures by
KATHARINE CAMERON

About This Book

Listen, children, for you will wish to hear where I found the tales which I have told you in this little book.

It is long, oh! so long ago, that they were sung up hill and down dale by wandering singers who soon became known all over the country as minstrels, or oftimes, because they would carry with them a harp, as harpers.

In court, in cottage, by princes and by humble folk, everywhere, by every one the minstrels were greeted with delight.

To such sweet music did they sing the songs or ballads which they made or perchance had heard, to such sweet music, that those who listened could forget nor tale nor tune.

In those far-off days of minstrelsy the country was alive with fairies. Over the mountains, through the glens, by babbling streams and across silent moors, the patter of tiny feet might be heard, feet which had strayed from Elfinland.

It was of these little folk and of their visits to the homes of mortals that the minstrels sang. Sterner songs too were theirs, songs of war and bloodshed, when clan fought with clan and lives were lost and brave deeds were done. Of all indeed that made life glad or sad, of these the minstrels sang.

From town to village, from court to inn they wandered, singing the old songs, adding verses to them here, dropping lines from them there, singing betimes a strain unheard before, until at length the day came when the songs were written down.

It was in the old books that thus

came to be written that I first found these tales, and when you have read them, perhaps you will wish to go yourself to the same old books, to find many another song of love and hate, of joy and sorrow.

MARY MACGREGOR.

CHAPTER 1
The Young Tamlane

The young Tamlane had lived among mortals for only nine short years ere he was carried away by the Queen of the Fairies, away to live in Fairyland.

His father had been a knight of great renown, his mother a lady of high degree, and sorry indeed were they to lose their son.

And this is how it happened.

One day, soon after Tamlane's ninth birthday, his uncle came to him and said, 'Tamlane, now that ye are nine years old, ye shall, as ye like it, ride with me to the hunt.'

And Tamlane jumped for joy, and clapped his hands for glee. Then he

mounted his horse and rode away with his uncle to hunt and hawk.

Over the moors they rode, and the wind it blew cold from the north. Over the moors they rode, and the cold north wind blew upon the young Tamlane until he grew cold and stiff.

Then the reins they fell from his hands and down from his horse slipped Tamlane, and laid himself down to rest, so weary, so cold was he. But no sooner had he lain down on the bare earth than he closed his eyes and fell fast asleep. And no sooner had he fallen fast asleep than the Queen of the Fairies came and carried Tamlane off to Fairyland.

For long years Tamlane dwelt among the little green folk, yet ofttimes he would come back to visit the land of his birth.

Now many were the hills and dells haunted by the fairy folk. Yet neither hill

nor dell pleased them more than the lone plain of Carterhaugh, where the soft-flowing rivers of Ettrick and Yarrow met and mingled.

Many a long day after fairies were banished from the plain of Carterhaugh would the peasant folk come to gaze at the circles which still marked the green grass of the lone moor. The circles had been made, so they said by the tiny feet of the fairies as they danced round and round in a ring.

Well, in the days before the fairies were banished from the plain of Carterhaugh, strange sights were to be seen there by the light of the moon.

Little folk, dressed all in green, would flit across the moor. They would form tiny rings and dance on their tiny toes until the moonlight failed.

Little horsemen dressed in green would go riding by, the bells on the fairy

bridles playing magic music the while. Sounds too, unknown to mortals, would tremble on the still night air.

Full of mischief too were these little elfin folk, and wise mortals feared to tread where fairy feet were tripping.

Wise mortals would warn the merry children and the winsome maidens lest they should venture too near the favourite haunts of fairydom.

To Carterhaugh came, as I have told you, many of the fairy folk; but more often than any other came a little elfin knight, and he was the young Tamlane, who had been carried away to Fairyland when he was only nine years old.

Beyond all other of the little green folk was the elf knight feared. And little was that to be wondered at, for well was it known that over many a fair-haired child, over many a beauteous maiden, he had used his magic power. Nor would he

let them go until they promised to come back another moonlit eve, and as a pledge of their promise he would seize from the children a toy, from the maidens a ring, or it might be their mantle of green.

Now about two miles from the plain of Carterhaugh stood a castle, and in the castle there lived a fair maiden named Janet.

One day her father sent for his daughter and said, 'Janet, ye may leave the castle grounds, as ye please, but never may ye cross the plain of Carterhaugh. For there ye may be found by young Tamlane, and he it is who ofttimes casts a spell o'er bonny maidens.'

Now Janet was a wilful daughter. She answered her father never a word, but when she had left his presence she laughed aloud, she tossed her head.

To her ladies she said, 'Go to Carter-

haugh will I as I list, and come from Carterhaugh will I as I please, and never will I ask leave of any one.'

Then when the moonbeams peeped in at her lattice window, the lady Janet tucked up her green skirt, so that she might run, and she coiled her beautiful yellow hair as a crown above her brow. And she was off and away to the lone plain of Carterhaugh.

The moonlight stole across the moor, and Janet laughed aloud in her glee. She ran across to the well, and there, standing alone, riderless, stood the steed of the little elfin knight.

Janet put out her hand to the rose-tree that grew by the well and plucked a dark red rose. Sweet was its scent and Janet put out her hand and plucked another rose, but ere she had pulled a third, close beside her stood a little wee man.



She was off and away to the lone plain of Carterhaugh.

He reached no higher than the knee of the lady Janet.

'Ye have come to Carterhaugh, Janet,' he cried, 'and yet ye have not asked my leave. Ye have plucked my red roses and broken a branch of my bonny rose-tree. Have ye no fear of me, Janet?'

The lady Janet tossed her head, though over her she felt creeping slow the spell of the little elfin knight. She tossed her head and she cried, 'Nay, I have no fear of you, ye little wee man. Nor will I ever ask leave of you as I come to and fro across the plain of Carterhaugh. Ye shall know that the moor belongs to me, me!' and Janet stamped her foot. 'My father made it all my own.'

But the young Tamlane took the white hand of the lady Janet in his own, and so gentle were his words, so kind his ways, that soon the maiden had no wish to leave the little wee man. Hand in

hand they wandered through the red rose-bushes that grew by the side of the well. And in the light of the moon the elf knight wove his spell and made the lady Janet his own.

Back to the castle sped Janet when the moonlight failed, but all her smiles were gone. Lone and sad was she, all with longing for her little elfin knight.

Little food would Janet eat in these days, little heed would she take of the gowns she wore. Her yellow hair hung down uncombed, unbraided around her sad, pale face.

Janet had been used to join in the games her four-and-twenty maidens played. She had run the quickest, tossed the ball the highest, nor had any been more full of glee than she.

Now the maidens might play as they listed, little did the lady Janet care.

When evening fell, her four-and-

twenty ladies would play their games of chess. Many a game had Janet won in bygone days.

Now the ladies might win or lose as they pleased, little did the lady Janet care. Her heart was away on the plain of Carterhaugh with her little wee elfin knight, and soon she herself would be there.

Once more the moonbeams peeped in at her lattice window, and Janet smiled, put on her fairest gown, and combed her yellow locks. She was off and away to Carterhaugh.

She reached the moor, she ran to the well, and there as before, there, stood the steed of the little elfin man.

And Janet put out her hand and plucked a red red rose, but ere she had plucked another, close beside her stood the young Tamlane.

'Why do ye pluck my roses?' asked

the little elf man. But Janet had not come to talk about the roses, and she paid no heed to his question.

'Tell me, Tamlane,' said the lady Janet, 'tell me, have ye always been a little elfin man? Have ye never, in days gone by, been to the holy chapel, and have ye never had made over you the sign of the Holy Cross?'

'Indeed now, Janet, the truth will I tell!' cried the young Tamlane.

Then the lady Janet listened, and the lady Janet wept as the little wee knight told her how he had been carried away by the Queen of the Fairies.

But yet a stranger tale he told to the maiden.

'Ere I was carried off to Fairyland, Janet,' said young Tamlane, 'we played as boy and girl in the old castle grounds, and well we loved each other as we played together in those merry merry

days of long ago. Ye do not forget, Janet?'

Then back into the lady Janet's mind stole the memory of her childhood's merry days, and of the little lad who had shared her toys and played her games. Together they had made the walls of the old castle ring with their laughter.

No, the lady Janet had not forgotten, and she knew that now, as in the days of long ago, she loved the young Tamlane.

'Tell me,' she said, 'tell me how ye do spend your day in Fairyland?'

'Blithe and gay is the life we lead,' cried the little wee knight. 'There is no sickness, no pain of any kind in Fairyland, Janet.

'In earth or air I dwell as pleases me the best. I can leave this little body of mine as it pleases me, and come back to it as I will. I am small, as you see me now, but when I will, I grow so small that a nut-shell is my home, a rosebud my bed.

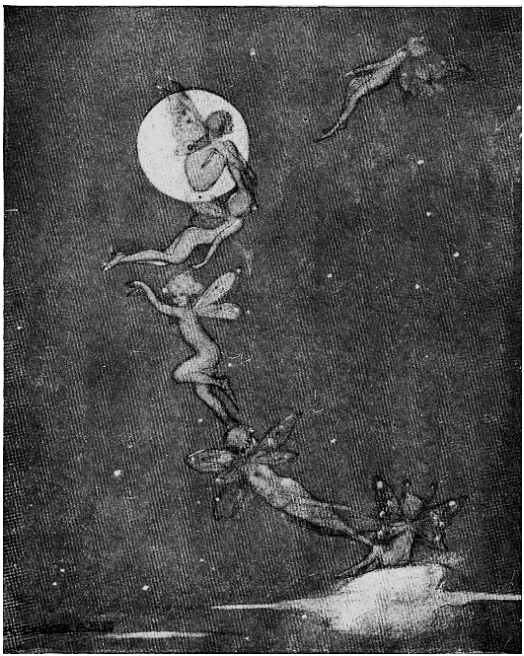
But I can grow big as well, Janet, so big that I needs must make my home in some lofty hall.

'Hither and thither we flit, bathe in the streams, frolic in the wind, play with the sunbeams.

'Never would I wish to leave Fairyland, Janet, were it not that at the end of each seven years an evil spirit comes to carry one of us off to his dark abode. And I, so fair and fat am I, I fear that I shall be chosen by the Evil one.

'But, weep not, Janet; as you wish to bring me back to the land of mortals, I will e'en show you how that maybe done. Little time is there to lose, for to-night is Hallowe'en, and this same night must the deed be done.

'On Hallowe'en, at the midnight hour, the fairy court will ride a mile beyond Carterhaugh to the cross at Milestone. Wait for me there, Janet, and ye



"In earth or air I dwell as
pleases me the best."

will win your own true knight.'

'But many a knight will ride amid the fairy train. How shall I know you, my little wee man?' cried Janet.

'Neither among the first nor among the second company shall ye seek for me,' said young Tamlane. 'Only when ye see the third draw nigh give heed, Janet, for among them ye will find me.

'Not on the black horse, nor yet on the brown horse, shall I ride. Let them pass, and keep ye quiet. But as the milk-white steed goes by, seize ye the bridle, Janet, and pull me down, and keep your arms ever around me. For on the milk-white steed I ride.

'On my right hand ye will see a glove, my left will be uncovered. Now, by these signs, ye will know your own true knight.

'Hold me fast, Janet, hold me fast, as you pull me down from my milk-white steed. For while your arms are around

me, the fairy folk will change me into fearful shapes.

'Into an adder, and into a snake they will change me. Yet, as ye love me, Janet, fear ye nought, but hold me fast.

'They will change me into a lion, and into a bear. Yet, as I love you, Janet, fear ye nought, but hold me fast.

'A toad, an eel I shall become, yet do not let me slide from your arms, Janet, but hold me fast.

'But, as the fairy folk change me into a blazing fagot, or a bar of hot iron, then throw me far from you, Janet, into the cold, clear well, throw me with all your speed.

'There will I change into your own true knight, Janet, and ye shall throw over me your mantle of green velvet.'

Dark was the night and full of gloom as the lady Janet hastened to the cross at Milestone, but her heart was glad and full

of light. She would see her own true knight in mortal form before the dawn of Hallowday.

It was between the hours of twelve and one o'clock when Janet stood alone at the spot where the fairy train would pass.

Fearsome it was there alone in the gloom, but the lady Janet was heedful of nought. She had but to wait, to listen. Yet not a sound did she hear, save only the wind as it whistled through the long grass.

Not a sound save the wind did she hear? Ah yes, now strange noises were blown to her eager ears. The bells on fairy bridles tinkled, the music of the tiny fairy band piped each moment more clear.

Janet looked, and by the light of Will o' Wisp she could just catch sight of their little oaten pipes. Shrill were the notes they blew on these, but softer were the

sounds they blew through tiny hemlock pipes. Then deeper came the tones of the bog-reeds and large hemlock, and Janet, looking, saw the little green folk draw nigh.

How merry the music was, how glad and good! Never was known a fairy yet who sang or played of aught but joy and mirth.

The first company of the little folk passed Janet as she stood patient, watchful by the cross; the second, passed, and then there came the third.

'The black steed! Let it go,' said Janet to herself.

'The brown steed! It matters not to me,' she whispered.

'The milk-white steed!' Ah, Janet had seized the bridle of the milk-white steed and pulled the little rider off into her strong young arms.

A cry of little elfs, of angry little elfs,

rang out on the chill night air.

Then as he lay in Janet's arms the angry little imps changed their stolen elfin knight into an adder, a snake, a bear, a lion, a toad, an eel, and still, through all these changes, the lady Janet held him fast.

'A blazing fagot! Let him change into a blazing fagot!' cried the angry little folk. 'Then this foolish mortal will let our favourite knight alone.'

And as young Tamlane changed into a blazing fagot the little folk thought they had got their will. For now the lady Janet threw him from her, far into the clear, cold well.

But the little angry imps were soon shrieking in dismay. No sooner was the fagot in the well than the little elfin knight was restored to his own true mortal form.

Then over the tall, strong knight

Janet threw her green mantle, and the power of the fairies over the young Tamlane was for ever gone. Their spell was broken.

Now, the Queen of the Fairies had hidden herself in a bush of broom to see what would happen. And when she saw her favourite knight change into his own true mortal shape, she was very cross, very cross indeed. The little fairy band was ordered to march home in silence, their pipes thrust into their tiny green girdles, and there were no more revels in the fairy court for many and many a long day to come.

CHAPTER 2
Hynde Etin

May Margaret did not love to sew, yet here in the doorway of her bower she sat, her silk seam in her hand.

May Margaret sat with her seam in her hand, but she did not sew, she dreamed, and her dream was all of Elmond wood.

She was there herself under the greenwood gay. The tall trees bowed, the little trees nodded to her. The flowers threw their sweetest scents after her as she passed along; the little birds sang their gladdest that she might hear. How fair and green and cool it was in the wood of Elmond!

On a sudden, Margaret sat upright in

the doorway of her bower. She dreamed no more. The sound of the hunting-horn rang in her ear. It was blown in Elmond wood.

Then down on her lap slipped the silken seam, down to her feet the needle. May Margaret was up and away to the greenwood.

Down by the hazel bushes she hastened, nor noticed that the evening shadows fell; on past the birch groves she ran, nor noticed that the dew fell fast.

No one did May Margaret meet until she reached a white-thorn tree. There, up from the grass on which he lay, sprang Hynde Etin.

'What do ye seek in the wood, May Margaret?' said he. 'Is it flowers, or is it for dew ye seek this bonny night of May?'

But Margaret did not care to answer. She only shook her head.

Then said Hynde Etin, 'I am forester

of Elmond wood, nor should ye enter it without my leave.'

'Nay now,' cried the lady Margaret, 'leave will I ask of no man, for my father is earl of all this land.'

'Your father may be earl of all the land, May Margaret, yet shall ye die, because ye will not ask my leave to come to Elmond wood.' And he seized her fast and tied her to a tree by her long, yellow locks.

Yet did Hynde Etin not kill the maiden, but this is what he did.

He pulled up by the root the tallest tree he could see, and in the hollow he dug a deep deep cave, and into the cave he thrust May Margaret.

'Now will ye wander no more in my woods!' cried Hynde Etin. 'Here shall ye stay, or home shall ye come with me to be my wife.'

'Nay, here will I rather stay!' cried

May Margaret, 'for my father will seek for me and will find me here.'

But the cave was dark and cold, and the earl sought yet did not find his daughter.

No bed was there in the cave for May Margaret, no bed save the rough earth, no pillow save a stone.

Poor May Margaret! She did not like the dark or the cold. Ere many days had passed away, she thought it would be better to live with Hynde Etin than to stay longer alone in so dismal a cave.

'Take me out, take me out!' then cried May Margaret.

Hynde Etin heard the maiden's call and he came and took her out of the cave. Deep into the greenwood he carried her, where his own home had been built, and there he made May Margaret, the earl's daughter, his wife.

For twelve long years Margaret lived

in the greenwood. And Hynde Etin was kind to her and she grew to love him well.

Seven little sons had Margaret, and happy and gay was their life in their woodland home. Yet oft did Margaret grieve that her little wee sons had never been taken to holy church. She wished that the priest might christen them there.

Now one day Hynde Etin slung his bow across his shoulder, placed a sheath of arrows in his belt, and was up and away to the hunt. With him he took his eldest wee son.

Under the gay greenwood they paced, Hynde Etin and his eldest son, and the thrush sang to them his morning song. Upward over the hills they climbed, and they heard the chimes of church bells clear.

Then the little wee son said to his

father, 'As ye would not be angry with me, father, there is somewhat I would ask.'

'Ask what ye will, my bonny wee boy,' said Hynde Etin, 'for never will I be cross with you.'

'My mother ofttimes weeps, father. Why is it that she sobs so bitterly?'

'Your mother weeps, my little wee son, for sore she longs to see her own kin. Twelve long years is it and more since last she saw them, or heard the church bells ring.

'An earl's daughter was your mother dear, and if I had not stolen her away one bonny night in May she might have wedded a knight of high degree.

'The forester of Elmond wood was I, yet as I saw her standing by the white-thorn tree I loved her well. And ere many days had gone by thy mother loved me too, and I carried her away to our green-

wood home.

'Dear to your mother are her seven little sons, dear to her, too, am I. Yet oft will the tears run down her cheek as she dreams of her old home and her father the earl.'

Then upward glanced the little wee son as he cried aloud, 'I will shoot the linnet there on the tree and the larks as they wing their flight, and I will carry them home to my mother dear that she may weep no more.'

Yet neither with linnet nor with lark could her little wee son woo the smiles back to his dear mother's face.

Now a day came when Hynde Etin in his greenwood home thought the hours passed but slow, and that same day he took his gun and his dog and off he went alone to hunt. His seven little wee sons he left at home with their mother.

'Mother,' said the eldest little son,

'mother, will ye be angry with me as I tell you what I heard?'

'Nay now, my little wee son,' said she, 'I will never be cross with you.'

'I heard the church bells ring as I went hunting over the hill, mother. Clear did they ring and sweet.'

'Ah, would I had heard them too, my little dear son,' cried Margaret, 'for never have I been in the holy church for twelve long years and more, and never have I taken my seven bonny sons to be christened, as indeed I would they were. In the holy church will my father be, and there would I fain go too.'

Then the little young Etin, for that was the name of Margaret's eldest son, took his mother's hand and called his six little brothers, and together they went through Elmond wood as fast as ever they could go. It may be that the mother led the way, it may be that so it chanced,

but soon they had left the greenwood far behind and stood on an open heath. And there, before them, stood a castle.

Margaret looked and Margaret smiled. She knew she was standing once again before her father's gate.

She took three rings from her pocket and gave them to her eldest wee boy.

'Give one,' she said, 'to the porter. He is proud, but so he sees the ring, he will open the gate and let you enter.

'Give another to the butler, my little wee son, and he will show you where ye are to go.

'And the third ye shall hand to the minstrel. You will see him with his harp, standing in the hall. It may be he will play goodwill to my bonny wee son who has come from Elmond wood.'

Then young Etin did as his mother had said.

The first ring he gave to the porter,

and without a word the gate was opened for the little wee boy.

He gave the second ring to the butler, and without a word the little wee boy was led into the hall.

The third ring he gave to the minstrel, and without a word he took his harp and forthwith played goodwill to the bonny wee boy from the greenwood.

Now, when the little Etin reached the earl, he fell on his knee before him.

The old earl looked upon the little lad, and his eyes they were filled with tears.

'My little wee boy, ye must haste away,' he cried. 'As I look upon you long my heart will break into three pieces, for ye have the eyes, the hair of my lost May Margaret.'

'My eyes are blue as my mother's eyes, and my yellow hair curls as does hers,' cried the little wee boy.

'Where is your mother?' then cried the earl, and the tears rolled down his cheek.

'My mother is standing at the castle gate, and with her are my six little wee brothers,' said the bonny young Etin.

'Run, porter boys, run fast,' said the earl, 'and throw wide open the gates that my daughter may come in to me.'

Into the hall came Margaret, her six little sons by her side. Before the earl she fell upon her knee, but the earl he lifted her up and said, 'Ye shall dine with me to-day, ye and your seven bonny little sons.'

'No food can I eat,' said Margaret, 'until I see again my dear husband. For he knows not where he may find me and his seven dear little sons.'

'Now will I send my hunters, and they shall search the forest high and low and bring Hynde Etin unto me,' said the

earl.

Then up and spake the little wee Etin.

'Search for my father shall ye not, until ye do send to him a pardon full and free.'

And the earl smiled at the young Etin. 'In sooth a pardon shall your father have,' said he.

With his own hand the earl wrote the pardon, and he sealed it with his own seal. Then the hunters were off and away to search for Hynde Etin. They sought for him east and they sought for him west, they sought all over the countryside. And at length they found him sitting alone in his home in Elmond wood. Alone, and tearing his yellow locks, was Hynde Etin.

'Get up, Hynde Etin, get up and come with us, for the earl has sent for you,' cried the merry hunters.

'The earl may do as he lists with me,' said Etin. 'He may cut off my head, or he may hang me on a greenwood tree. Little do I care to live,' moaned Etin, 'now that I have lost my lady Margaret.'

'The lady Margaret is in her father's hall, Hynde Etin,' said the hunters, 'nor food will she eat until ye do come to her. There is a pardon for you here sealed by the earl's own hand.'

Then Hynde Etin smoothed his yellow locks, and gay was he as he went with the hunters to the castle.

Down on his knee before the earl fell Hynde Etin. 'Rise, Etin, rise!' cried the earl. 'This day shall ye dine with me.'

Around the earl's table sat the lady Margaret, her husband dear, and her seven little wee sons. And the little Etin looked and looked and never a tear did he see on his mother's face.

'A boon I have to ask,' cried then the

little wee boy; 'I would we were all in the holy church that the good priest might christen me and my six little brothers. For in the greenwood gay never a church did we see, nor the sound of church bells did we hear.'

'Soon shall your boon be granted,' cried the earl, 'for this very day to the church shall ye go, and your mother and your six little wee brothers shall be with you.'

To the door of the holy church they came, but there did the lady Margaret stay.

'For twelve long years and more,' she cried, and bowed her head, 'for twelve long years have I never been within the holy church, and I fear to enter now.'

Then out to her came the good priest, and his smile was sweet to see. 'Come hither, come hither, my lily-white flower,' said he, 'and bring your babes



"For twelve long years have I never been within the holy church, and I fear to enter now."

with you that I may lay my hands upon their heads.'

Then did he christen the lady Margaret's seven little wee sons. And their names, beginning with the tiniest, were these—Charles, Vincent, Sam, Dick, James, John. And the eldest little wee son was, as you already know, named after his father, Etin.

And back to the earl's gay castle went the lady Margaret with Hynde Etin and her seven little new-christened sons. And there they lived happy for ever after.

CHAPTER 3
Hynde Horn

Hynde Horn was a little prince. It was because he was so courteous, so kind a little lad that Prince Horn was always called Hynde Horn. For hend or hynde in the days of long ago meant just all the beautiful things which these words, courteous, kind, mean in these days.

Hynde Horn lived a happy life in his home in the distant East. For it was in the bright glowing land of the sun that his father, King Allof, reigned.

The Queen Godylt loved her little son too well to spoil him. She wished him to learn to share his toys, to play his games with other boys.

Thus, much to the delight of little

Prince Horn, two boys, almost as old as he was, came to live with him in the palace. Athulph and Fykenyld were their names.

They were merry playmates for the little prince, and, as the years rolled by, Athulph and Fykenyld thought there was no one to equal their prince Hynde Horn. They would serve him loyally when he was king and they were men.

All went well in the palace of this far-off eastern land until Hynde Horn was fifteen years of age. Then war came, without warning, into this country of blue sky and blazing sun.

Mury, King of the Turks, landed in the kingdom of King Allof, who was all unprepared for fight. And King Mury, with his fierce soldiers, pillaged the land, killed the good King Allof, seized his crown, and placed it on his own head.

Then poor Queen Godylt fled from

the palace, taking with her Hynde Horn and his two playmates Prince Athulph and Prince Fykenyld.

I cannot tell you what became of the beautiful queen, but Mury, the cruel king, captured Hynde Horn and made him and his two playfellows prisoners.

What should he do with Prince Horn, who was heir to the kingdom he had seized?

Should he kill the lad, he wondered. Yet cruel as King Mury was, he could not do so dastardly a deed.

But Hynde Horn was tall and strong, and Hynde Horn was loved by the people. He must certainly be sent out of the country.

So King Mury planned, and King Mury plotted, and at length he thought of a way, by which he hoped to be for ever rid of the gallant prince and his two companions.

He ordered the prisoners to be brought down to the seashore, and there the lads were thrust into an open boat, and pushed out to sea. It seemed as though they must perish, for King Mury had given orders that no provisions were to be placed in the boat.

There was neither helm nor oar for the little craft. The lads could do nothing to guide her on her dangerous course. Now they would drift gently on the swell of the quiet sea, now they would whirl giddily on the crest of a storm-tossed wave. Faint and weary grew Hynde Horn and his two companions. It seemed to them that they would perish from hunger or be devoured by the storm.

Yet every day the little boat was drifted by soft breezes or driven by wild storm-clouds westward and always westward. At length one day a great wave came and lifted it high up on to the coast.

The boys had reached Scotland, the country over which King Alymer ruled.

Now it chanced that King Alymer was passing along the sea-coast, and seeing the lads lying there, pale and bruised, he ordered that they should be carried to the palace, that they might be fed and that their wounds might be bathed.

So carefully were they tended in the palace of King Alymer that soon roses bloomed again on the cheeks of Hynde Horn and his two companions, strength crept back to their bruised bodies.

Ere many weeks had passed, all in the palace loved Hynde Horn and knew that he was a prince worthy of his name.

When the prince was well, King Alymer listened to the story the lad had to tell, the story of his ruined home, his lost kingdom, his suffering at the hands of the cruel King Mury.

And King Alymer, for he was gentle

at heart, shed a tear as he heard.

'Thou shalt stay at our court, Hynde Horn,' he said, 'and learn all that a prince should learn. Then, when thou art older, thou shalt go to war with Mury, the cruel king of the Turks. Thou shalt win back thine own kingdom and rule over it.'

Then the king called for Athelbras, his steward, and bade him care for Prince Horn and his two companions.

A suite of rooms was given to the prince in the palace, and here he and his playfellows were trained in all courtly ways. When his studies were over, Hynde Horn would go out to hawk and hunt. Often, too, he would wrestle and tilt with his companions, so that in days to come he would be able to take his place in battle and in tournament.

But one day King Alymer heard the young prince's voice as he sang. So pure, so sweet rang the voice that the king said

to himself, 'Hynde Horn shall be trained by the best harpist in our land.'

Then happy days began for the young prince. Rather would he sing, as he touched softly the cords of the harp, than would he fight or tilt; rather would he sing and play, than go to hunt and hawk. Yet well had he loved these sports in former days.

Now, King Alymer had one daughter, the Princess Jean. Dearly did the king love his daughter, and ofttimes he stroked her hair and wished that she had a playfellow to cheer her in his absence. For when the king would journey from city to city to see that justice and right ruled throughout the land, his child was left alone.

But now that Hynde Horn and his companions had come, the king knew that the Princess Jean would no longer be dull while he was away.

She, too, in the early days after the prince came to the palace, would ride to hunt and hawk, Hynde Horn by her side. And later she would listen as he talked to her of his beautiful home under the eastern sky, of his dear lost mother, Godylt, and his father, King Allof, who was slain by the cruel Mury.

She would listen, her eyes dim with tears, for she knew how well he had loved his home in the far-off East.

But her eyes would flash as he told of the cruel King Mury, and of how one day he would go back to his kingdom and win it from the hand of the evil king.

Her eyes would flash and her heart would beat, yet when she was alone she would weep. For what would she do if Hynde Horn went away to the far East and she was left alone? To the Princess Jean it seemed that the palace would be empty were Prince Horn no longer

dwelling there.

Well, the years rolled on and Hynde Horn was no longer a boy, Princess Jean no longer a girl. They both had changed in many ways, but in one way both were still as they had been when they were boy and girl together. They had loved each other then, they loved each other now. So well did they love one another that they went to King Alymer and told him that they wished to marry, and that without delay.

Now the king was well pleased that Hynde Horn should marry his beautiful daughter the Princess Jean, but he was not willing that the wedding should be at once.

'Thou must wait, my daughter,' said the king; 'thou must wait to wed Hynde Horn until he has journeyed to the far East and won back the kingdom Mury so unjustly wrested from him. Then, when

he has shown himself as brave as he is courteous, then shall the wedding be without delay.'

Thus it was that a few days later Hynde Horn and the Princess Jean stood together to say farewell one to another. Hynde Horn was going away to win his spurs, to show himself worthy of the lady whom he loved.

Before he left her, he gave her a beautiful silver wand, and on the wand were perched seven living larks. They would warble to the Princess Jean when Hynde Horn was no longer near to sing to her, as had been his wont, in his soft sweet voice.

And the Princess Jean drew from her own finger a ring, and seven diamonds shone therein. She placed it on the finger of her dear Hynde Horn, and said, 'As long as the diamonds in this ring flash bright, thou wilt know I love thee as I do

now. Should the gleam of the diamonds fade and grow dim, thou wilt know, not that my love grows less, for that may never be, but thou wilt know that evil hath befallen me.'

Then sadly they parted and Hynde Horn, the ring on his finger, hastened down to the shore. Swiftly he embarked in the ship that awaited him, and sailed away. On and on for many a long day he sailed, until he reached the kingdom which Mury the king had seized when he killed King Allof.

Here Hynde Horn warred against King Mury until he overcame him and won again the kingdom of the East for himself, the rightful heir. And the people over whom he ruled rejoiced, for Hynde Horn, though he no longer was prince but king, did not forget his kind and courteous ways.

For seven years King Horn ruled in

this distant land, doing many a deed of daring meanwhile, and winning both gold and glory for himself.

Ofttimes during these long years he would glance at the diamond ring which the Princess Jean had given to him, and always the diamonds flashed back bright. Then one day, when his work was over and he knew he was free to go again to the princess, his heart wellnigh stopped for fear. He had looked downward at his ring, and lo! the diamonds were dull and dim. Their lustre had vanished.

The Princess Jean must be in trouble, or already evil had befallen her.

Hynde Horn hastened down to the seashore, and there he hired a ship to sail speedily to Scotland, where King Alymer ruled.

The ship sailed swiftly, yet the days seemed long to King Horn. Oft he would gaze at his ring, but only to find the

diamonds growing always more dull, more dim. Hynde Horn longed as he had never longed before to be once more beside the Princess Jean that he might guard her from all harm.

Fair blew the wind, onward sailed the ship, and at length Hynde Horn saw land, and knew that he was drawing near to Scotland.

A little later he had reached the coast and had begun his journey towards the palace.

As he hastened on, King Horn met a beggar man.

'Old man,' cried Hynde Horn, 'I have come from far across the sea. Tell me what news there is in this country, for it is many a long day since I have been in Scotland.'

'There is little news,' said the beggar, 'little news, for we dwell secure under our gracious King Alymer. To be sure, in the

palace there is rejoicing. The feast has already been spread for forty days and more. To-day is the wedding-day of the king's daughter, the Princess Jean.'

Ah, now Hynde Horn understood why his diamonds had grown dull and dim. His beautiful princess had not forgotten him. Of that he was quite sure. But King Alymer and his people had grown weary of waiting for his return. Seven years had seemed a long, long time, and now the king was anxious that his daughter should marry and wait no longer for the return of Hynde Horn.

And, but this King Horn did not know, Fykenyld, his old companion, loved the princess, and had wooed her long and was waiting to marry her. False to Hynde Horn was Fykenyld, for ever did he say, 'Hynde Horn is dead,' or 'Hynde Horn hath forgotten the Princess Jean,' or 'Hynde Horn hath married one

of the dark-haired princesses in the far-off East.' And never did he leave the palace to go in search of his old playfellow, whom he had once longed to serve.

Now King Alymer had listened to Fykenyld's words, and though he did not believe Hynde Horn would forget his daughter, he did believe that Hynde Horn might be dead. Thus it was that he commanded Princess Jean to look no longer for the return of Hynde Horn, but without more delay to marry Prince Fykenyld.

And the princess, pale and sad, worn out by long waiting, promised to look no more for Hynde Horn. To please her father and his people, she even promised to marry Hynde Horn's old playfellow, Prince Fykenyld.

Ah, but had they only known, King Horn was already hastening towards the

palace.

Already he had learned that the wedding had not yet taken place.

Now he was speaking to the beggar again, quickly, impatiently.

'Old man, lend me your torn and tattered coat. Thou shalt have my scarlet cloak in its place. Thy staff, too, I must have. Instead of it thou shalt have my horse.'

You see the young king had made up his mind to go to the palace dressed as a beggar.

But the old man was puzzled. Could the young prince from across the sea really wish to dress in his torn rags? Well, it was a strange wish, but right glad would he be to have the scarlet cloak, the gallant steed.

When King Horn had donned his disguise, he cried, 'Tell me now, how dost thou behave thyself when thou

comest to the palace to beg?'

'Ah, sir,' said the old man, 'thou must not walk thus upright. Thou must not look all men boldly in the face. As thou goest up the hill, thou must lean heavily on thy staff, thou must cast thine eyes low to the ground. When thou comest to the gate of the palace, thou must tarry there until the hour for the king to dine. Then mayest thou go to the great gate and ask an alms for the sake of St. Peter and St. Paul, but none shalt thou take from any hand, save from the hand of the young bride herself.'

Hynde Horn thanked the old beggar man, and, bidding him farewell, set off up the hill toward the palace gate. And no one looking at him in the tattered coat, bending half double over his staff, no one could have guessed that this beggar man was the brave and courteous Hynde Horn.

Now when at length King Horn reached the palace gate, the wedding feast was spread.

Princess Jean was sitting on the throne beside her father, Prince Fykenyld on her other side, smiling to himself.

He would soon be wedded to the princess, he thought, and in days to come he would reign with her over King Alymer's wide domains. Fykenyld had no thought to spare for his old playmate, save to be glad that he had never returned from the far East to claim his bride.

But though seven long years had rolled away, Princess Jean had not forgotten Hynde Horn. Forgotten! Nay, day and night he was in her thought, in her heart. Yet was she sure that he would never now return.

It is true that in her despair she had yielded to her father's wishes; she had

promised to wed Prince Fykenyld that very day. It was no wonder then that she sat on the throne sad at heart, pale of face.

Hynde Horn had knocked at the palace gate. It was no humble beggar's rap he gave, but a bold, impatient knock. King Horn had forgotten for the moment that he was only a beggar man.

The palace gate was flung wide. One of the noble guests had arrived, thought the porter. But when he saw a beggar standing before him, he well-nigh slammed the gate in the poor man's face.

Before he could do this Hynde Horn spoke, and his voice made the porter pause to listen, so sweet, so soft it was. It brought back to the rough old man the thought of Hynde Horn, for he had been used to speak in just such a tone.

The porter cleared his voice, wiped his eyes, for he, as all others who dwelt in

the palace, had loved Hynde Horn, and grieved sorely for his absence.

For the sake of Hynde Horn it was that the porter listened to the beggar man's request.

'I have come to ask for alms, yet will I take them from none save from the hand of the Princess Jean herself, and from across the sea,' said the beggar man.

Still hearing the sound of the lost prince's voice, the porter bade the beggar wait, and stealing up into the hall unnoticed, he passed through the crowd of gay lords and ladies until he reached the princess.

'A beggar from across the sea begs alms, yet none will he have save from the hand of the Princess Jean herself,' said the porter boldly. Then—for he had known the princess from the time that she was only a tiny little girl—then he added in a whisper: 'The man hath a

voice soft and sweet as that of our lost Prince Horn.'

Princess Jean heard, and not a moment did she pause.

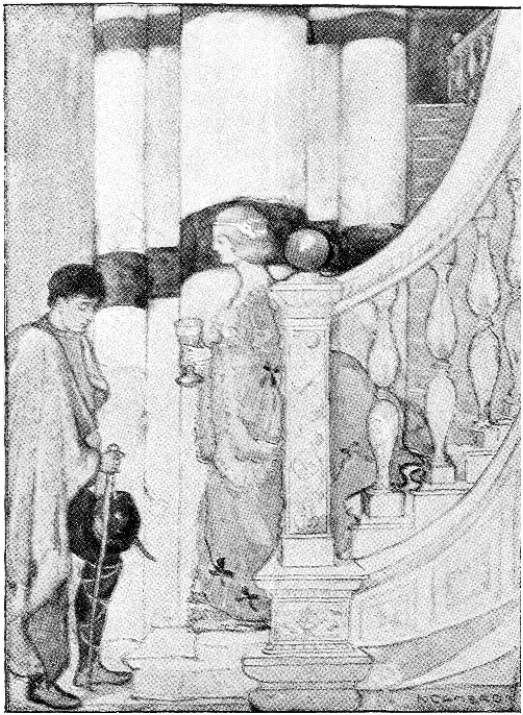
She stepped down from the throne, took a cup of red wine in her hand, and heeding not the astonished stare of lord and lady, she hastened out to the palace gate.

Very beautiful she looked in her long white robe, her gold combs glinting in her hair.

'Drink,' she said gently, as she stood before the beggar, 'drink, and then haste to tell me what tidings thou dost bring from across the sea.'

The beggar took the cup of wine and drank. As he handed back the cup to the princess he dropped into it the diamond ring, which had been dull and dim for many a long day now.

Princess Jean saw the ring. She knew



"Drink," she said gently, "Drink."

it was the very one she had given to Hynde Horn. Her heart bounded. Now at least she would hear tidings of her long-lost love.

'Oh tell me, tell me quick,' she cried, 'where didst thou find this ring? Was it on the sea or in a far-off country that thou didst find it, or was it on the finger of a dead man? Tell me, oh tell me quick!' cried the Princess Jean.

'Neither by sea nor by land did I find the ring,' answered the beggar, 'nor on a dead man's hand. It was given to me by one who loved me well, and I, I give it back to her on this her wedding-day.' As Hynde Horn spoke he stood up, straight and tall, and looked straight into the eyes of the Princess Jean.

Then, in a flash, she understood. In spite of the tattered coat, she knew her own Hynde Horn.

Her pale cheeks glowed, her dim eyes

shone.

'Hynde Horn!' she cried, 'my own Hynde Horn, I will never let thee leave me again. I will throw away my golden combs, I will put on my oldest gown, and I will come with thee, and together we will beg for bread.'

King Horn smiled, and his voice was soft as he answered, 'No need is there to take the gold combs from thy hair or to change thy white robe for one less fair. This is thy wedding-day, and I have come to claim my bride.' And King Horn flung aside the old torn coat, and the Princess Jean saw that beneath the rags Hynde Horn was clothed as one of kingly rank.

Then throughout the palace the tidings spread, 'Hynde Horn hath come back, Hynde Horn hath come back, and now is he king of his own country.'

And that very day King Horn was wedded to the beautiful Princess Jean,

with her father's blessing, and amid the rejoicings of the people.

And Prince Fykenyld slunk away, ashamed to look his old playmate in the face.

Not many months passed ere King Horn and Queen Jean sailed away to reign together in the far East. And never again in the years to come did the diamonds on King Horn's ring grow dull or dim.

CHAPTER 4
Thomas the Rhymer

It is six hundred years ago since Thomas the Rhymer lived and rhymed, and in those far-off days little need was there to tell his tale. It was known far and wide throughout the countryside.

Thomas was known as Thomas the Rhymer because of the wonderful songs he sang. Never another harper in all the land had so great a gift as he. But at that no one marvelled, no one, that is to say, who knew that he had gained his gift in Elfland.

When Thomas took his harp in his hand and touched the strings, a hush would fall upon those who heard, were they princes or were they peasants. For

the magic of his music reached the hearts of all who stood around him. Were the strains merry, gleeful? The faces of those who heard were so wreathed in smiles. Were they sad, melancholy? The faces of those who looked upon the harpist were bathed in tears. Truly Thomas the Rhymer held the hearts of the people in his hand.

But the minstrel had another name, wonderful as the one I have already told to you.

Thomas the Rhymer was named True Thomas, and that was because, even had he wished it, Thomas could not say or sing what was not true.

This gift too, as you will hear, was given to him by the Queen of Elfland.

And yet another name had this wonderful singer.

He was born, so the folk said, in a little village called Ercildoune. He lived

there, so the folk knew, in a castle strongly built on the banks of a little river. Thus to those who dwelt in the countryside the Rhymer was known as Thomas of Ercildoune. The river which flowed past the castle was the Leader. It flowed broader and deeper until two miles beyond the village it ran into the beautiful river Tweed. And to-day the ruins of an old tower are visited by many folk who have heard that it was once the home of the ancient harpist.

Thomas of Ercildoune, Thomas the Rhymer, and True Thomas were thus only different names for one marvellous man who sang and played, never told an untruth, and who, moreover, was able to tell beforehand events that were going to take place.

Listen, and I will tell you how Thomas of Ercildoune came to visit Elfland.

It was one beautiful May morning

that Thomas felt something stirring in his heart. Spring had come, spring was calling to him. He could stay no longer in the grim tower on the banks of the Leader. He would away, away to the woods where the thrush and the jay were singing, where the violets were peeping forth with timid eyes, where the green buds were bursting their bonds for very joy.

Thomas hastened to the woods and threw himself down by the bank of a little brook.

Ah yes! spring has come. How the little birds sing, how the gentle breezes whisper! Yet listen! what is it Thomas hears beyond the song of the birds, the whisper of the breeze?

On the air floats the sound of silver bells. Thomas raises his head. *Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle!* The sound draws nearer, clearer. It is music such as one might

hear in Elfland.

Beyond the wood, over the lonely moors, rode a lady. So fair a lady had Thomas never seen.

Her palfrey was dapple-grey and she herself shone as the summer sun. Her saddle was of pure ivory, bright with many precious stones and hung with cloth of richest crimson.

The girths of her saddle were of silk and the buckles were each one a beryl. Her stirrups of clear crystal and adorned with pearls hung ready for her fairy feet. The trappings of her palfrey were of finest embroidery, her bridle was a chain of gold.

From the palfrey's mane hung little silver bells, nine-and-fifty little silver bells. It was the fairy music of the bells that had reached the ears of Thomas as he lay dreaming on the bank of the little brook.

The lady's skirt was green, green as the leaves of spring, her cloak was of fine velvet. Her long black hair hung round her as a veil, and her brow was adorned with gems.

By her side were seven greyhounds, other seven she led by a leash. From her neck hung a horn and in her belt was thrust a sheath of arrows.

It seemed as though the lady gay were on her way to the hunting-field.

Now she would blow her horn until the echoes answered merrily, merrily; now she would trill her songs, until the wild birds answered gaily, gaily.

Thomas of Ercildoune gazed, and Thomas of Ercildoune listened, and his heart gave a great bound as he said to himself, 'Now, by my troth, the lady is none of mortal birth. She is none other than Mary, the Queen of Heaven.'

Then up sprang Thomas from the

little woodland brook and away sped he over the mountain-side, that he might, so it were possible, reach her as she rode by the Eildon tree, which tree grew on the side of the Eildon hills.

'For certainly,' said Thomas, 'if I do not speak with that lady bright, my heart will break in three.'

And in sooth, as she dismounted under the Eildon tree, Thomas met the lady, and kneeling low beneath the greenwood, he spoke, thus eager was he to win a benison from the Queen of Heaven.

'Lovely lady, have pity upon me, even as thou art mother of the Child who died for me.'

'Nay now, nay now,' said the lady gay, 'no Queen of Heaven am I. I come but from the country thou dost call Elf-land, though queen of that country in truth I am. I do but ride to the hunt with

my hounds as thou mayest hear.' And she blew on her horn merrily, merrily.

Now Thomas did not wish to lose sight of so fair a lady.

'Go not back to Elfland; stay by my side under the Eildon tree,' he pleaded.

'Nay,' said the Queen of Elfland, 'should I stay with thee, a mortal, my fairness would fade as fades a leaf.'

But Thomas did not believe her, and, for he was a bold man, he drew near and kissed the rosy lips of the Elfland Queen.

Alas, alas! no sooner had he kissed her than the lady fair changed into a tired old woman.

She no longer wore a skirt of beautiful green, but a long robe of hodden grey covered her from head to foot. The light, bright as the summer sun that had shone around her, faded, and her face grew pale and thin. Her eyes no longer danced for joy, they gazed dull and dim

before her. And on one side of her head the long black hair had changed to grey.

It was a sight to make one sad, and Thomas, as he gazed, cried, as well he might, 'Alas, alas!'

'Thyself hast sealed thy doom, Thomas,' cried the lady. 'Thou must come with me to Elfland. Haste thou therefore to bid farewell to sun and moon, to trees and flowers, for, come weal, come woe, thou must e'en serve me for a twelvemonth.'

Then Thomas fell upon his knees and prayed to Mary mild that she would have pity upon him.

But when he arose the Queen of Elfland bade him mount behind her, and Thomas could do nought save obey her command.

Her steed flew forward, the Eildon hills opened, and horse and riders were in the caverns of the earth.



Under the Eildon tree
Thomas met the Lady.

Thomas felt darkness close around him. On they rode, on and yet on; swift as the wind they rode. Water reached to his knee, above and around him was darkness, and ever and anon the booming of the waves.

For three days they rode. Then Thomas grew faint with hunger and cried, 'Woe is me, I shall die for lack of food.'

As he cried, the darkness grew less thick, and they were riding forward into light. Bright sunlight lay around them as they rode toward a garden. It was a garden such as Thomas had never seen on earth.

All manner of fruit was there, apples and pears, dates and damsons, figs and currants, all ripe, ready to be plucked. In this beautiful garden, too, there were birds, nightingales building their nests, gay popinjays flitting hither and thither among the trees, thrushes singing their

sweetest songs.

But these Thomas neither saw nor heard. Thomas had eyes only for the fruit, and he thrust forth his hand to pluck it, so hungry, so faint was he.

'Let be the fruit, Thomas,' cried the lady, 'let be the fruit. For dost thou pluck it, thy soul will go to an evil place, nor shall it escape until the day of doom. Leave the fruit, Thomas, and come lay thy head upon my knee, and I will show thee a sight fairer than ever mortal hath seen.' And Thomas, being fain to rest, lay down as he was bid, and closed his eyes.

'Now open thine eyes, Thomas,' said the lady, 'and thou shalt see three roads before thee. Narrow and straight is the first, and hard is it to walk there, for thorns and briars grow thick, and spread themselves across the pathway. Straight up over the mountain-tops on into the city of God runs this straight and narrow

road. It is named the path of Goodness. And ever will the thorns prick and the briars spread, for few there be who tread far on this rough and prickly road.

'Look yet again, Thomas,' said the lady. And Thomas saw stretching before him a long white road. It ran smooth and broad across a grassy plain, and roses blossomed, and lilies bloomed by the wayside. 'That,' said the lady, 'is named the path of Evil, and many there be who saunter along its broad and easy surface.'

Thomas said no word, but lay looking at the third pathway as it twisted and twined in and out amid the cool, green nooks of the woodland. Tiny rills caught the sunlight and tossed it back to the cold, grey rock down which they trickled; tiny ferns waved a welcome from their sheltered crevices. 'This,' said the lady, 'this is the fair road to Elfland, and along its beauteous way must thou and I ride

this very night. But speak thou to none, Thomas, when thou comest to Elfland. Though strange the sights you see, the sounds you hear, speak thou to none, for never mortal returns to his own country does he speak one word in the land of Elfs.'

Then once again Thomas mounted behind the lady, and hard and fast did they ride until they saw before them a castle. It stood on a high hill, fair and strong, and as it came in sight the lady reined in her white steed.

'See, Thomas, see!' she cried, 'here is the castle that is mine and his who is king of this country. None like it is there, for beauty or for strength, in the land from which thou comest. My lord is waited on by knights, of whom there are thirty in this castle. A noble lord is mine, nor would he wish to hear how thou wert bold and kissed me under the Eildon

tree. Bear thou in mind, Thomas, that thou speak no word, nay, not though thou art commanded to tell thy tale. I will say to my courtiers that I took from thee the power of speech ere ever we crossed the sea.'

Thomas listened, and dared not speak. Thomas stood still, still as a stone, and gazed upon the lady, and lo! a great wonder came to pass.

Once more the lady shone bright as the sun upon a summer's morn, once more she wore her skirt of green, green as the leaves of spring, and her velvet cloak hung around her shoulders. Her eyes flashed and her long hair waved once more black in the breeze.

And Thomas, looking at his own garments, started to see that they too were changed. For he was now clothed in a suit of beautiful soft cloth, and on his feet were a pair of green velvet shoes.

Clear and loud the lady fair blew her horn, clear and loud, and forward she rode toward the castle gate.

Then down to welcome their queen trooped all the fairy court, and kneeling low before her, they did her reverence.

Into the hall she stepped, Thomas following close at her side, silent as one who had no power to speak.

They crowded around him, the knights and squires; they asked him questions about his own country, yet no word dared Thomas answer.

Then arose great revelry and feasting in the castle of the Elfin Queen.

Harps and fiddles played their wildest and most gladsome tunes, knights and ladies danced, and all went merry as a marriage bell.

Across the hall Thomas looked, and there a strange sight met his glance. Thirty harts and as many deer lay on the

oaken floor, and bending over them, their knives in their hands, were elfin cooks, making ready for the feast. Thomas wondered if it were but a dream, so strange seemed the sights he saw.

Gaily passed the days, and Thomas had no wish to leave the strange Elfland. But a day came when the queen said to Thomas, 'Now must thou begone from Elfland, Thomas, and I, myself, will ride with you back to your own country.'

'Nay now, but three days have I dwelt in thy realm,' said Thomas, 'with but little cheer. Give me leave to linger yet a little while.'

'Indeed, indeed, Thomas,' cried the Queen of Elfland, 'thou hast been with me for seven long years and more, but now thou must away ere the dawn of another day. To-morrow there comes an evil spirit from the land of darkness to our fair realm. He comes each year to

claim our most favoured and most courteous guest, and it will be thou, Thomas, thou, whom he will wish to carry to his dark abode. But we tarry not his coming. By the light of the moon we ride to-night to the land of thy birth.'

Once again the lady fair mounted her white palfrey, and Thomas rode behind until she brought him safe back to the Eildon tree.

There, under the leaves of the greenwood, while the little birds sang their lays, the Queen of Elfland said farewell to Thomas.

'Farewell, Thomas, farewell, I may no longer stay with thee.'

'Give me a token,' pleaded Thomas, 'a token ere thou leavest me, that mortals may know that I have in truth been with thee in Elfland.'

'Take with thee, then,' said the lady, 'take with thee the gift of harp and song,

and likewise the power to tell that which will come to pass in future days. Nor ever shall thy tales be false, Thomas, for I have taken from thee the power to speak aught save only what is true.'

She turned to ride away, away to Elfland. Then Thomas was sad, and tears streamed from his grey eyes, and he cried, 'Tell me, lady fair, shall I never meet thee more?'

'Yea,' said the Elf Queen, 'we shall meet again, Thomas. When thou art in thy castle of Ercildoune and hearest of a hart and hind that come out of the forest and pace unafraid through the village, then come thou down to seek for me here, under the Eildon tree.' Then loud and clear blew she her horn and rode away. Thus Thomas parted from the Elfin Queen.

On earth seven slow long years had passed away since Thomas had been seen

in the little village of Ercildoune, and the villagers rubbed their eyes and stared with open mouth as they saw him once again in their midst. Ofttimes now Thomas was to be seen wandering down from his grim old castle down to the bonny greenwood. Ofttimes was he to be found lying on the bank of the little brook that babbled to itself as it ran through the forest, or under the Eildon tree, where he had met the Elf Queen so long before. He would be dreaming as he lay there of the songs he would sing to the country folk. So beautiful were these songs that people hearing them knew that Thomas the Rhymer had a gift that had been given to him by no mortal hand.

He would be thinking, too, as he lay by the babbling brook, of the wars and dangers that in years to come would fall upon his country. And those who hearkened to the woes he uttered found that

the words of True Thomas never failed to come to pass.

Seven long years passed away since Thomas had parted from the Elfland Queen, and yet another seven.

War had raged here and there throughout the land, when on a time it chanced that the Scottish army encamped close to the castle of Ercildoune where Thomas the Rhymer dwelt.

It was a time of truce, and Thomas wished to give a feast to the gallant soldiers who had been fighting for their country.

Thus it was that the doors of the old castle were flung wide, and noise and laughter filled the banquet-hall. Merry were the tales, loud the jests, bright the minstrel strains that night in the castle of Ercildoune. But when the feast was over Thomas himself arose, the harp he had brought from Elfland in his hand, and a

hush fell upon the throng, upon lords and ladies, and upon rough armed men.

The cheeks of rugged warriors that day were wet ere ever Thomas ceased to sing. Nor ever in the years to come did those who heard forget the magic of his song.

Night fell, those who had feasted had gone to rest, when in the bright moonlight a strange sight was seen by the village folk.

Along the banks of the Leader there paced side by side a hart and a hind, each white, white as newly fallen snow.

Slowly and with stately steps they moved, nor were they affrighted by the crowd which gathered to gaze at them.

Then, for True Thomas would know the meaning of so strange a sight, then a messenger was sent in haste to the castle of Ercildoune.

As he listened to the tale the messen-

ger brought, Thomas started up out of bed and in haste he put on his clothes. Pale and red did he grow in turn as he listened to the tale, yet all he said was this: 'My sand is run, my thread is spun, this token is for me.'

Thomas hung his elfin harp around his neck, his minstrel cloak across his shoulders, and out into the pale moonlight he walked. And as he walked the wind touched the strings of the elfin harp and drew forth a wail so full of dole that those who heard it whispered: 'It is a note of death.'

On walked Thomas, slow and sad, and oft he turned to look again at the grim walls of the castle, which he knew he would never see again.

And the moonbeams fell upon the grey tower, and in the soft light the walls grew less grim, less stern, so thought Thomas.

'Farewell,' he cried, 'farewell. Nor song nor dance shall evermore find place within thy walls. On thy hearthstone shall the wild hare seek a refuge for her young. Farewell to Leader, the stream I love, farewell to Ercildoune, my home.'

As Thomas tarried for a last look, the hart and the hind drew near. Onward then he went with them toward the banks of the Leader, and there, before the astonished folk, he crossed the stream with his strange companions, and nevermore was Thomas the Rhymer seen again.

For many a day among the hills and through the glens was Thomas sought, but never was he found. There be some who say that he is living yet in Elfland, and that one day he will come again to earth.

Meanwhile he is not forgotten. The Eildon tree no longer waves its branches

in the breeze, but a large stone named the Eildon-tree stone marks the spot where once it grew. And near to the stone flows a little river which has been named the Goblin Brook, for by its banks it was believed that Thomas the Rhymer used to talk with little men from the land of Elf.

CHAPTER 5
Lizzie Lindsay

In the fair city of Edinburgh there lived many many years ago a beautiful maiden named Lizzie Lindsay. Her home was in the Canongate, which is now one of the poorest parts of the city.

But in the days when Lizzie danced and sang, and made her father's and mother's heart rejoice, the Canongate was the home of all the richest lords and ladies.

For close to the Canongate was Holyrood, the palace where the king held his court. And it was well, thought the lords and ladies of long ago, to live near the palace where there were many gay sights to be seen.

Lizzie had been a bonny wee girl, and as she grew up she grew bonnier still, until, not only in Edinburgh, but far and wide throughout the country, people would speak of her beauty. Even the folk who dwelt away over the hills in the Highlands heard of the beauty of Lizzie Lindsay.

Dame Lindsay loved her daughter well, and gave her beautiful gowns of silk and velvet. Her father, too, would bring her home many a sparkling jewel, many a brilliant gem. It seemed as though Lizzie Lindsay had all that her heart could wish.

Certainly she did not wish to leave her home in the Canongate, for though lord after lord, noble after noble begged for her hand, Lizzie but tossed her beautiful head high in the air as she said them nay.

But though it was well known that

the lovely maiden had kind looks and gentle words to spare for none save only her dear father and her doting mother, yet still the lords and nobles would dance more gladly with Lizzie than with any other maiden. And a ball, even a ball given by the court at the palace of Holyrood, seemed to be less gladsome were it known that the fair maiden would not be there.

Now, as I have told you, the fame of Lizzie Lindsay's beauty had spread even to the Highlands. And Donald, the young laird of Kingcaussie, heard that she was fairer than any other maiden in the land, and that she was haughtier and more wilful as well. For she would have nought to say to any of the rich suitors who surrounded her.

Then Donald, who was tall and handsome, and who was used to have his own way, smiled as he heard of Lizzie's

wilful spirit and her great beauty. He made up his mind that he would go to Edinburgh and try to win as his bride the bonnie lassie who would have nought to do with noble or with lord.

The young laird lived with his father and mother in a castle built high amid the heather-covered hills, and little until now had Donald cared for city ways or city walls. To hunt the deer, to chase the roe, to spend the long hours from early morn until even among the heathery moors which were all his own, had been happiness enough for him.

But now, now the glory faded from the heather, and the hunt and chase lost their delight. Sir Donald's heart was in the fair city of Edinburgh with beautiful Lizzie Lindsay, whom, though he had not seen, he loved.

At length one day the young laird went to his lady mother and, kissing her

hand right courteously, he begged her to grant him a boon. For Donald had been well trained, and, though he was no longer a boy, he did not dream of leaving his home among the hills until he had gained his mother's consent.

'Grant me a boon, lady mother,' said the young laird. 'Send me away to the fair city of Edinburgh, for it is there that my true love dwells. And if ye will do this I will bring you home a daughter more beautiful than any other maiden in the land.'

Now the young laird's mother had heard of Lizzie Lindsay, and it may be that she was glad that her son should wish to bring to the castle so beautiful a bride. Yet she had no wish for the maiden to be won by aught save by love for her dear son alone.

Lizzie had refused to wed with lord or noble, it was true, yet the broad lands,

the ancient castle of the MacDonalds, might please her fancy. But the Lady of Kingcaussie determined that neither for land nor for castle should bonnie Lizzie Lindsay come to the Highlands.

When she saw young Donald at her side, and heard him begging leave to go to the fair city of Edinburgh, she smiled as she looked into his eager face, and answered slowly, 'My son, ye shall go to Edinburgh as it please you, and so ye are able ye shall bring back with you Lizzie Lindsay as your bride. A fairer maiden, I can well believe, has never graced these walls. Yet, if ye go, it shall not be as Sir Donald MacDonald, the heir to broad lands and ancient castles, but as a simple stranger, without riches and without rank. Then, if ye do win your bride, it will be through love alone,' said his mother gravely. But her eyes shone bright and glad, for she thought that there was not

a maiden in all the land who would not be proud to wed her son, though he had neither riches nor lands.

As for the old laird, he laughed when he heard why his son had grown weary at the hunt and listless at the chase. He laughed and cried, 'Let the lad go to the city; before a year has passed away he will be home again and the beautiful Lizzie Lindsay with him.' For his old father, too, thought that no maiden could refuse to love his bonny self-willed son.

Well, young Donald was too anxious to be off and away to Edinburgh to be grieved to go as a simple Highlander. Before the day was over he had said farewell to his light-hearted old father and to his gentle lady mother, and clad in a rough tartan kilt and without a servant to follow him, the young laird was off to the fair city of Edinburgh.

When Donald reached Edinburgh he

wondered how he would see the maiden of whose beauty and of whose cleverness he had so often heard.

He had not long to wait, for he had scarce been a day in the city when he heard that a great ball was to be given and to be graced by the presence of the fair maiden whom he hoped to win as his bride.

Donald made up his mind that he too would go to the ball, and it was easy for him to do this, as there were many in the city who knew the young laird.

When he entered the ballroom he saw that the lords and nobles were dressed in suits of velvet or silk and satins, while he wore only his kilt of rough tartan.

The lords and ladies too stared at the tall handsome young Highlander in his strange garments, and some, who did not know him, forgot their good manners

and smiled and nudged each other as he passed down the room.

But the young laird had no thought to spare for the crowd. He was making his way to the circle, in the midst of which stood Lizzie Lindsay. He had heard too often of the beautiful maiden not to be sure it was she as soon as his eyes fell upon her face.

Young Donald, in his homespun tartan, stood on the outskirt of the little crowd that surrounded her, listening. The lords in their gay suits were doing their utmost to win the goodwill of the maiden, but their flattery and foolish words seemed to give her little pleasure. Indeed she was too used to them to find them aught but a weariness.

Soon Donald was bowing before the maiden he had left his home to win, and begging her to dance with him. And something in the bright eyes and gallant

bearing of young Donald pleased the petted maiden, and, despite his rough suit, she had nought but smiles for the young stranger from the Highlands.

The lords, in their silks and velvets, opened their eyes wide in astonishment as Lizzie glided past them with young Donald; the ladies smiled and flouted her, but the maiden paid no heed to their words or looks.

Donald was not flattering her as she was used to be flattered, he was telling her of the country in which he dwelt. And Lizzie as she listened heard the hum of the bees, smelt the fragrance of the heather. Nay, she even forgot the ballroom, and she was out on the silent moorland or climbing the steep mountains side by side with the young stranger whose face was so eager, whose eyes were so bright. She was stooping to pluck the wildflowers that grew in the nooks of

some sheltered glen, or she was kilting her dainty gown and crossing the mountain streamlets, and ever the tall, young stranger was by her side.

Before the ball was over Donald knew that Lizzie Lindsay's home was in the Canongate, and he had begged to be allowed to see her there.

Lizzie had no wish to lose sight of the bright young Highlander, and she told him gaily that if he came to the Canongate to see her he should be welcome, both to her and her dear father and mother.

When the dance ended the young laird went to his lodgings, and his heart was light and his dreams glad. His old father had thought he might be in Edinburgh a year ere he won his bride. But young Donald murmured to himself that it would scarce be twelve long months before he was back again to the High-

lands with his bonny Lizzie Lindsay.

The next day Donald was at the Canongate betimes, and Lizzie welcomed him merrily, and her father and mother looked in kindly fashion at the young stranger, for indeed Donald had the gift of winning hearts.

But neither father nor mother dreamed that the country clad youth would win their beautiful daughter's hand, for had she not refused it to many a lordly earl and noble knight.

Yet the more Lizzie heard about the Highlands, the more she longed to be there with young Donald by her side.

At length a day came when Donald, with little fear and much hope in his heart, asked the maiden if she would go with him to the Highlands.

'We will feed on curds and whey,' cried the daring young Donald; 'your cheeks will grow more pink, and your

brow more white with our simple fare. Your bed shall be made on the fresh green bracken and my plaid shall wrap you round. Will ye come to the Highlands with me, Lizzie Lindsay?'

Now Lizzie had listened to young Donald's words with joy, but also with some fear. Her food had been of the daintiest, her bed of the softest down, and the young stranger, who was indeed scarce a stranger now, had, it seemed, but little to offer her save his love. Yet Lizzie still wished to go to the Highlands.

But when Dame Lindsay heard what young Donald had said she hardened her heart against the bonny young Highlander.

'Ye shall speak no more to my daughter,' she cried, 'until ye have told me where your home is, and how many broad lands are your own?' For it seemed to the old dame that a penniless lad



"Will ye come to the Highlands
with me, Lizzie Lindsay?"

would never dare to win her daughter, when lords and nobles had wooed her in vain.

But Donald's head was high, and he seemed to feel no shame as he answered the old dame bravely—

'My name is Donald MacDonald, and I hold it high in honour. My father is an old shepherd and my mother a dairy-maid. Yet kind and gentle will they be to your beautiful daughter if she will come with me to the Highlands.'

Dame Lindsay could scarce believe she had heard aright. Her daughter marry a shepherd lad! Nay, that should never be, though indeed the lad was a bonny one and brave.

Then in her anger she bade young Donald begone. 'If ye do steal away my daughter, then, without doubt ye shall hang for it!' she cried.

The young laird turned haughtily on

his heel. He had little patience, nor could his spirit easily brook such scorn as the old Dame flung at him.

He turned on his heel and he said, 'There is no law in Edinburgh city this day which can hang me.'

But before he could say more Lizzie was by his side. 'Come to my room, Donald,' she pleaded; and as he looked at the beautiful girl the young laird's wrath vanished as quickly as it had come. 'Come to my room for an hour until I draw a fair picture of you to hang in my bower. Ye shall have ten guineas if you will but come.'

'Your golden guineas I will not have!' cried Donald quickly. 'I have plenty of cows in the Highlands, and they are all my own. Come with me, Lizzie, and we will feed on curds and whey, and thou shalt have a bonnie blue plaid with red and green strips. Come with me, Lizzie

Lindsay; we will herd the wee lambs together.'

Yet, though Lizzie loved young Donald MacDonald, she still hesitated to leave her kind parents and her beautiful home.

She sat in her bower and she said to her maid, 'Helen, what shall I do, for my heart is in the Highlands with Donald?'

Then the maid, who was well-nigh as beautiful as her mistress, cried, 'Though I were a princess and sat upon a throne, yet would I leave all to go with young Donald MacDonald.'

'O Helen!' cried Lizzie, 'would ye leave your chests full of jewels and silk gowns, and would ye leave your father and mother, and all your friends to go away with a Highland laddie who wears nought but a homespun kilt?'

But before her maid could answer her, Lizzie had sprung from her chair,

saying, 'Yet I think he must be a wizard, and have enchanted me, for, come good or come ill, I must e'en go to the Highlands.'

Then early one morning Lizzie tied up her silk robes in a bundle and clad herself in one of Helen's plain gowns. With her bundle over her arm, Lizzie Lindsay was off to the Highlands with Donald MacDonald.

Donald's heart was glad as he left the fair city of Edinburgh behind him, Lizzie by his side. He had so much to tell his beautiful bride, so much, too, to show her, that at first the road seemed neither rough nor long.

But as the hours passed the way grew rougher, the hills steeper, and Lizzie's strength began to fail. Her shoes, too, which were not made for such rough journeys, were soon so worn that her feet grew hot and blistered.

'Alas!' sighed Lizzie Lindsay, 'I would I were back in Edinburgh, sitting alone in my bower.'

'We are but a few miles away from the city,' said Donald; 'will you even now go back?'

But the tears trickled slowly down the maiden's cheeks, and she sobbed, 'Now would I receive no welcome from my father, no kiss from my mother, for sore displeased will they be that I have left them for you, Donald MacDonald.'

On and on they trudged in silence, and as evening crept on Donald cried aloud, 'Dry your tears now, Lizzie, for there before us is our home,' and he pointed to a tiny cottage on the side of the hill.

An old woman stood at the door, gazing down the hill, and as they drew near she came forward with outstretched hands. 'Welcome, Sir Donald,' she said,

'welcome home to your own.'

She spoke in Gaelic, as Highlanders do, so Lizzie did not know what she said.

Sir Donald whispered quickly in the same language, 'Hush, call me only Donald, and pretend that I am your son.' The old woman, though sore dismayed at having to treat the young laird in so homely a way, promised to do his bidding.

Then Donald turned to Lizzie. 'Here, mother,' he said, 'is my lady-love, whom I have won in the fair city of Edinburgh.'

The old woman drew Lizzie into the cottage, and spoke kindly to her, but the maiden's heart sank. For a peat fire smouldered on the hearth and the room was filled with smoke. There was no easy chair, no couch on which to rest her weary body, so Lizzie dropped down on to a heap of green turf.

Her sadness did not seem to trouble

Donald. He seemed gayer, happier, every moment.

'We are hungry, mother,' he said; 'make us a good supper of curds and whey, and then make us a bed of green rushes and cover us with yonder grey plaids.'

The old woman moved about eagerly as though overjoyed to do all that she could for her son and his young bride.

Curds and whey was a supper dainty enough for a queen, as Lizzie whispered to her shepherd lad with a little sigh. Even the bed of green rushes could not keep her awake.

No sooner had she lain down than, worn out with her long journey, she fell fast asleep, nor did she awake until the sun was high in the sky.

As she awoke she heard Donald's voice. He was reproaching her, and she had not been used to reproach.

'It would have been well,' said Donald, 'that you had risen an hour ago to milk the cows, to tend the flock.'

The tears gathered in Lizzie's eyes and trickled down her cheeks.

'Alas, alas!' she sighed, 'I would I had never left my home, for here I am of little use. I have never milked a cow, nor do I know how to begin, and flocks have I never tended. Alas that I ever came to the Highlands! Yet well do I love Donald MacDonald, and long and dull would the days have been had he left me behind him in Edinburgh.'

'Shed no more tears, Lizzie,' said Donald gently. 'Get up and dress yourself in your silk gown, for to-day I will take you over the hills of Kingcaussie and show you the glens and dales where I used to play when I was but a little lad.'

Then Lizzie dried her tears and soon she was up and dressed in her finest

gown, and leaning on Donald's arm she wandered with him over the heathery hills until they reached a noble castle.

Joyously then laughed the young laird, as he bade Lizzie gaze all around her and be glad.

'I am the lord of all you see, Lizzie,' cried he, 'for this castle is my home and the mountains are my own broad lands.'

Then joyously too laughed Lizzie Lindsay, for she knew that her shepherd lad was none other than the far-famed Sir Donald MacDonald.

At that moment the castle gates were flung wide, and the old Laird of Kingcaussie came out to greet the bride.

'Ye are welcome, Lizzie Lindsay, welcome to our castle,' he said right courteously. 'Many were the lords and nobles who begged for your hand, but it is young Donald, my son, who has won it, with no gift save the glance of his bonny blue

eyes.' And the old laird laughed merrily as he looked up at his son.

The laird's gracious mother too came down to greet her, and well was she pleased that her boy had won the beautiful maiden he loved.

As for Lizzie Lindsay, she sent to Edinburgh to fetch her father and mother, that they might see for themselves how wise their daughter had been to follow Donald MacDonald to the Highlands.

CHAPTER 6
The Gay Goshawk

Lord William sat alone in his grey northern castle. He had come but lately from the sunny South, and the room in which he sat struck chill after the sun-warmed rooms to which he had grown used. Little joy had Lord William in his old grey castle, for his heart was far away in the sunny South.

All alone he sat save for his favourite bird, the gay goshawk. And it, for it loved its master well, blinked a tear from its eye as it peered into Lord William's gloomy face, blinked and peered again, so pale and lean had his master grown.

'Now what ill has befallen,' thought the bird, and it ruffled its feathers in its

distress.

Lord William looked up and stroked the glossy plumage of his gay goshawk.

'Be still, my bonny bird, be still,' said Lord William, 'and I will smooth your ruffled wings.'

The goshawk blinked and peered more close into the tired face of his master. Then he began to speak.

'Have you lost your sword or spear in the tournament, have you lost them in sunny England?' asked the bird, 'or are you pale with grief because your true love is far away?'

'By my troth!' cried Lord William, 'I have lost nor sword nor spear, yet do I mourn, for my true love whom I fain would see.

'You shall carry a message to her, my gay goshawk, for you can fly over hill and dale. You shall carry a letter to my love, and you shall e'en bring me an answer,'

said Lord William, 'for you can speak as well as fly, my bonny bird.'

'But how shall I know your true love?' said the bird. 'Never have I seen her face or heard her voice.'

'O well will you know my true love,' cried Lord William, 'for in all England lives there none so fair as she. The cheeks of my love are red as the red red rose, and her neck, it is whiter than new-fallen snow.

'Near to her lattice window grows a birch, whose leaves tremble in the breeze. There shall you sit, my gay goshawk, and you shall sing to her as she goes to holy church.

'With four-and-twenty maidens will she go, yet well will you know my own true love, for she is the fairest of them all. You shall know her, too, by the gold that bedecks her skirt, by the light that glimmers in her hair.'

Then Lord William sat down and wrote a letter to his love, and fastened it firm under the pinion of his gay goshawk. Away flew the bird, swift did it fly to do its master's will. O'er hill and dale it winged its flight until at length it saw the birch-tree that grew near the lady's bower.

There, on the birch-tree, did the goshawk perch, and there did he sing his song as the lady with her four-and-twenty maidens passed beneath its branches towards the church.

The sharp eyes of the goshawk glanced at each beautiful maiden, and quick was he to see Lord William's love, for sweet was she as the flowers that spring in May. Gold was embroidered on her skirt, sunlight glistened in her beautiful yellow hair.

When another day dawned the gay goshawk left the birch-tree and alighted

on the gate, a little nearer to the lattice window where sat the beautiful lady to whom he had been sent. Here again he sang his song. Loud and clear he sang it first, loud and clear that all might hear. Soft and sweet he sang it after, soft and sweet that only Lord William's lady might catch the note of love. And ever, loud or soft, the last words of his song were these, 'Your true love cannot come to you here.'

Then said the lady to her four-and-twenty maidens, 'Eat, my merry maidens, eat and drink, for the feast is spread. I go but to my lattice window to listen to the birds, for hark! they are singing their evensong.'

But in her heart the lady knew there was only one song she longed to hear. Wide she opened her lattice window and, leaning out, she hearkened to the song of the gay goshawk.

'Sing on, ye bonny bird,' she cried, 'sing on, for I know no song could be so sweet that came not from my own true love.'

A little nearer flew the gay goshawk, and first his song was merry as a summer morn, and then it was sad as an autumn eve.

As she listened, tears dropped from the eyes of the beautiful lady. She put out her hand and stroked the pinions of the gay goshawk, and lo! there dropped from beneath his wing Lord William's letter.

'Five letters has my master sent to you,' said the bird, 'and long has he looked for one from you, yet never has it come, and he is weary with long waiting.'

Then the lady sighed, for no letter had she ever had from her true love. 'My stepmother has hidden the letters, for never one have I seen,' she cried. Her fingers tore open the letter which had



"I go but to my lattice window
to listen to the birds."

dropped from beneath the bird's wing, and she read, and as she read she laughed aloud.

Lord William had written a letter that was full of grief, because he could not come to the lady he loved, yet did the lady laugh. And this is why she laughed both long and glad. Because she had made up her mind that as he could not come to her she herself would go to Lord William.

'Carry this message to my own true love,' said she then to the gay goshawk.

'Since you cannot come to me, I myself will come to you in your cold northern country. And as a token of my love I send you by your gay goshawk a ring from off my finger, a wreath from off my yellow hair. And lest these should not please you I send my heart, and more than that can you not wish.

'Prepare the wedding feast, invite the

guests, and then haste you to meet me at St. Mary's Church, for there, ere long, will you find me.

'Fly, gay goshawk, fly and carry with you my message to Lord William.'

And the bird flew o'er hill and dale until once again he reached the grey northern castle in which his master dwelt. And he saw his master's eye grow glad, his pale cheek glow as he listened to the message, as he held the tokens of his own true love.

Then the lady, left alone, closed her lattice window and went up to her own room followed by her maidens. Here she began to moan and cry as though she were in great pain, or seized by sudden illness. So ill she seemed that those who watched her feared that she would die.

'My father!' moaned the lady, 'tell my father that I am ill; bid him come to me without delay.'

Up to her room hastened her father, and sorely did he grieve when he saw that his daughter was so ill.

'Father, dear father,' she cried, holding his strong hand in her pale white one, 'grant me a boon ere I die.'

'As you ask not for the lord who lives in the cold north country, my daughter, you may ask for what you will, and it shall be granted.'

'Promise me, then,' said his daughter, 'that though I die here in the sunny South, you will carry me when I am dead to the cold grey North.

'And at the first church to which we come, tarry, that a mass may be said for my soul. At the second let me rest until the bells be tolled slow and solemn. When you come to the third church, which is named St. Mary's, grant that from thence you will not bear me until the night shades fall.'

Then her father pledged his word that all should be done as she wished.

Now as her father left her room, the lady sent her four-and-twenty maidens down to her bower that they might eat and drink. And when she was left alone she hastened to drink a sleeping draught which she had already prepared in secret.

This draught would make her seem as one who was dead. And indeed no sooner had she drunk it than she grew pale and still.

Her cruel stepmother came up into the room. She did not love the beautiful maiden, and when she saw her lying thus, so white, so cold, she laughed, and said, 'We shall soon see if she be really dead.'

Then she lit a fire in the silent room, and placing some lead in a little goblet, she stirred it over the flames with an iron spoon until it melted. When the lead was melted the stepmother carried a spoonful

carefully to the side of the bed, and stood there looking down upon the still white form. It neither moved nor moaned.

'She is not dead,' murmured the cruel woman to herself; 'she deceives us, that she may be carried away to the land of her own true love. She will not lie there silent long.' And she let some drops of the burning lead fall on to the heart of the quiet maiden. Yet still the maiden never moved nor cried.

'Send for her father,' shouted the cruel stepmother, going to the door of the little room, for now she believed the maiden was really dead.

'Alas, alas!' cried her father when he came and saw his daughter lying on her white bed, so pale, so cold. 'Alas, alas, my child is dead indeed!'

Then her seven brothers wept for their beautiful sister; but when they had dried their tears, they arose and went

into the forest. There they cut down a tall oak-tree and made a bier for the maiden, and they covered the oak with silver.

Her seven sisters wept for their beautiful sister when they saw that she neither stirred nor moaned. They wept, but when they had dried their tears they arose and sewed a shroud for the maiden, and at each stitch they took they fastened into it a little silver bell.

Now the duke, her father, had pledged his word that his daughter should be carried, ere she was buried, to St. Mary's Church. Her seven brothers therefore set out on the long sad journey toward the gloomy north country, carrying their sister in the silver-mounted bier. She was clad in the shroud her seven sisters had sewed, and the silver bells tinkled softly at each step her seven strong brothers took along the road.

The stepmother had no tears to shed. Indeed she had no time to weep, for she must keep strict watch over the dead maiden's seven sisters, lest they too grew ill and thus escaped her power.

As for the poor old father, he shut himself up alone to grieve for his dear lost child.

When the seven brothers reached the first church, they remembered their father's promise to their sister. They set down the bier and waited, that a mass might be sung for the lady's soul.

Then on again they journeyed until before them they saw another church. 'Here will we rest until the bell has been tolled,' they said, and again the bier was placed in the holy church.

'We will come to St. Mary's ere we tarry again,' said the seven brothers, and there they knew that their journey would be over. Yet little did they know in how

strange a way it would end.

Slow and careful were the brothers' steps as they drew near to the church of St. Mary, slow and sad, for there they must part from their beautiful pale sister.

The chime of the silver bells floated on the still air, dulling the sound of the seven strong brothers' footsteps.

They were close to St. Mary's now, and as they laid the bier down the brothers started, for out of the shadows crept tall armed men, and in their midst stood Lord William. He had come as he had been bidden to meet his bride. The brothers knew him well, the lord from the cold grey country, who had stolen the heart of their beautiful sister.

'Stand back,' commanded Lord William, and his voice was stern, for not thus had he thought to meet the lady he loved. 'Stand back and let me look once more upon the face of my own true love.'

Then the seven brothers, though they had but little goodwill for the northern lord, lifted the bier and laid it at his feet, that once again he might look upon the face of their pale cold sister.

And lo! as Lord William took the hand, the cold white hand, of his true love in his own, it grew warm, as his lips touched hers they grew rosy, and the colour crept into her cheeks. Ere long she lay smiling back at her own true love with cheeks that bloomed and eyes that shone. The power of the sleeping draught was over.

'Give me bread, dear lord,' cried the lady, 'for no food have I tasted for three long days and nights, and this have I done that I might come to you, my own true love.'

When the lady had eaten she turned to her seven strong brothers. 'Begone, my seven bold brothers,' she cried, 'begone

to your home in the sunny South, and tell how your sister has reached her lord.'

'Now woe betide you,' answered her bold brothers, 'for you have left your seven sisters and your old father at home to weep for you.'

'Carry my love to my old father,' cried the lady, 'and to my sisters seven. Bid them that they dry their tears nor weep for me, for I am come to my own true love.'

Then the seven brothers turned away in anger and went back to their home in the South. But Lord William carried his own true love off to the old grey castle where they were married. And the gay goshawk sang their wedding song.

CHAPTER 7
The Laird o' Logie

It was when James the Sixth was king in Scotland that the young Wemyss of Logie got into sore trouble.

Wemyss of Logie was one of the king's courtiers; a tall, handsome lad he was, and a favourite with both king and queen.

Now King James had brought his wife, Queen Anne, across the sea to Scotland. Her home was in Denmark, and when she came, a royal bride, to Scotland, she brought with her a few fair Danish maids. She thought it would be dull in her new home unless she had some of her own country-folk around her.

Among these maids was a tall, beautiful girl named Margaret Twynlace. Her the queen loved well, and oft would she speak with Margaret of their old free life in the country over the sea.

It chanced on a day that the young Laird of Logie was in attendance upon the king, and the Danish maid, Margaret Twynlace, in waiting upon the queen; and that day they two looked at each other, and yet another day they two talked to each other, indeed many were the times they met. And before long it was well known at court that the young Laird of Logie loved the Danish maid Margaret, and would marry her as he could.

But now trouble befell the young laird. He had been seen talking with the Earl of Bothwell, and he a traitor to the king. Nor was it alone that Wemyss of Logie had been seen to speak with

Bothwell. It was even said that he had letters written by the traitor in his room at Holyrood.

No sooner had this rumour reached the king than orders were given to search both young Logie himself and the room in which he was used to sleep.

On his person no letters were found, but in his room, flung carelessly into his trunk, lay a packet of letters tied and sealed. And the seal was that of the traitor, the Earl of Bothwell.

The young laird was taken at once before the king. He spoke in his usual fearless tones.

'It is true,' said he, 'that I have oft-times spoken to the Earl of Bothwell, and it is true that I received from him the sealed packet which was found in my trunk. But of that which is written in the packet know I nought. The seal is, as you see, unbroken. Nor knew I that the earl

was still acting as traitor,' added the lad, as he saw displeasure written on the face of the king.

But despite all he could say, the young laird was arrested as a traitor and thrown into prison. Margaret Twynlace with her own eyes saw Sir John Carmichael, keeper of the prison, turn the key in the lock.

Margaret went quickly to the queen's house, but there did she neither sew nor sing. She sat twining her fingers in and out, while she cried, 'Woe is me that ever I was born, or that ever I left my home in Denmark. I would I had never seen the young Laird of Logie.' And then Margaret wept bitterly, for having seen the young laird, she loved him well.

When the queen came to her bower, she was grieved to see her favourite maid in tears. Yet had she no comfort to offer her, for well she knew that, even should

he wish it, little power had the king to save the young Laird of Logie.

But the queen spoke kindly to the maid, and told her that she, Margaret, might e'en go herself to King James to beg for the life of the young Laird of Logie. For it was well known that the sentence passed on him would be death.

Then Margaret Twynlace wiped from her face all traces of her tears. She put on her soft green silk gown, and she combed out her bonny yellow hair. Thus she went into the presence of the king and fell on her knee before him.

'Why, May Margaret,' said the king, 'is it thou? What dost thou at my feet, my bonny maid?'

'Ah, sire,' cried she, 'I have come to beg of thee a boon. Nor ever since I came over the sea have I begged of thee until now. Give me, I beseech of thee, the life of the young Laird of Logie.'

'Alas, May Margaret,' cried the king, 'that cannot I do! As thou gavest to me all the gold that is in Scotland yet could I not save the lad.'

Then Margaret Twynlace turned away and crept back to the queen's bower. Yet now no tears fell from her blue eyes, for if neither king nor queen could help the young Laird of Logie, she herself would save him from death.

She would wait until night, when the king and queen slumbered, and then she would carry out her plan. A brave plan it was, for Margaret Twynlace was no coward maid.

Quiet and patient she waited in the little ante-room, close to the queen's bedchamber, waited until she felt sure the royal pair were fast asleep. Then tripping lightly on tiptoe, she stole into the bedroom, where, as she had guessed, both king and queen were slumbering

sound.

She crossed the room, quiet as any mouse, and reached the toilet table. There lay the king's gold comb, and close to it the little pearl knife, the king's wedding gift to his queen.

Back tripped Margaret, still on tiptoe, to the ante-room, and stood, her breath coming quick.

Had she roused the king or queen? Was that the bed creaking?

No, there was not a sound. The royal pair slept sound as before.

Then downstairs in the dark fled Margaret, down to the room where Sir John Carmichael lay slumbering, without a thought of his prisoner, the young Laird of Logie.

Loud did the maiden knock at his door, loud and long, until at last Sir John was roused.

'Sir John,' cried the maid, 'haste thee

and wake thy prisoner, the young Laird of Logie, for the king would speak to him this very moment. Open the door, for here be the tokens he sends to thee,' and Margaret held out to Carmichael the gold comb and the pearl knife.

Now, when Sir John had opened the door, he saw the tokens that the maid held out to him. He knew them well and hastened to do the king's will, rubbing his sleepy eyes the while, and muttering under his breath, 'The king holds audience at strange hours; yet must his orders be obeyed.'

He took the great key in his hand and went to the prison door. Margaret followed close, her heart bounding, not wholly in fear, nor yet wholly in hope.

Sir John turned the prison lock and roused the young Laird of Logie from his dreams, saying only, 'The king would speak with thee, without delay.'

Thus in the dead of night Margaret led the captain and his prisoner to the door of the ante-room.

'Wait thou here, Sir John,' said the maid, 'until thy prisoner returns.'

The young laird started as Margaret spoke. He had not guessed that the maid wrapped in the rough cloak was his own dear Margaret Twynlace.

But Sir John noticed nothing. He was wondering how long it would be ere he would be again in his comfortable bed.

Margaret drew the prisoner into her own little room. He tried to speak, but not a word would she let him utter. She led him to the window, and showed him a rope which she herself had fastened there.

She pushed a purse of gold into his hand, a pistol into his belt, and bade him shoot when he was free, that she might know that he was safe. 'Then haste,' said

Margaret, 'haste with all thy might to the pier at Leith. Ships wilt thou find there in plenty to carry thee into a safe haven.'

The young Laird of Logie would fain have tarried with the brave Danish maid, but not a moment was there to lose. The king might wake, Sir John might grow impatient and come in search of his prisoner; thus whispered the maid as she urged young Wemyss of Logie to flee.

He knew she spoke the truth, and he slipped down the rope, and in a moment was standing on the ground. He hastened to the palace gates, and getting safely through, he stayed only to fire his pistol that Margaret Twynlace might know that no evil had befallen.

When Margaret heard the shot she stole softly downstairs and stood at the hall door gazing wistfully after the young Laird of Logie. Yet not long dare she tarry there, lest the queen should need her

services. Noiselessly she crept back into the ante-room. Hark! what was that? The king was moving! Indeed, the pistol-shot had roused King James, and he jumped out of bed crying, 'That pistol was fired by none other than the young Laird of Logie.'

He shouted for his guards and bade them go send their captain, Sir John Carmichael, to his presence.

Sir John, fearing nothing, came before the king, and falling on his knee before him he said, 'Sire, what is thy will?'

'Where is thy prisoner, where is the young Laird of Logie?' demanded the king.

Sir John stared. Had not the king himself sent for his prisoner?

'The young Laird of Logie!' he said. 'Sire, thou didst send thy tokens to me, a golden comb, a pearl knife. See, they are here,' and Sir John drew them from his



She stood at the hall door
gazing wistfully after the
young Laird of Logie.

pocket and held them up before the bewildered king.

'And with the tokens came an order to send my prisoner at once to thy presence. I brought him to the door of the ante-room, where I was bidden to wait thy will.'

'If thou hast played me false, Carmichael, if thou hast played me false,' said the king, 'thou shalt thyself be tried to-morrow in the court of justice in place of the prisoner, the young Laird of Logie.'

Then Carmichael hastened to the door of the ante-room as fast as ever he could go. And he called out, 'O young Wemyss of Logie, as thou art within, come out, for I must speak to thee.'

Margaret Twynlace smiled to herself as she opened the door of the ante-room. Carmichael stepped into the room, stopped short, and stared. The open window, the rope that hung there, told him

all he had come to ask. He stared, but never a word did he find to say.

Then maid Margaret laughed aloud and clapped her hands for glee.

'Dost wish thy prisoner, the Laird of Logie?' she cried. 'Thou shalt not see him again for many a long day. Long ere the morning dawned he was on board one of the ships at Leith, and now he is sailing on the sea. He is free, he is free!'

King James did not punish the brave Danish maid. Nor when he heard from Queen Anne all that the maid had done did he blame Sir John Carmichael.

Indeed ere many months had passed away the king sent a pardon to the young laird. Then was he not long in coming back to bonny Scotland to marry brave Margaret Twynlace, who had saved his life.