

# *Tanglewood Tales*

CLASSIC LIT FOR YOUNG READERS

C.E. SMITH

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C.E. Smith

Libraries of Hope

Tanglewood Tales
Classic Literature for Young Readers

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# Tanglewood Tales

Told to the Children by
C.E. SMITH

With Pictures by
OLIVE ALLEN

# About This Book

In this little book you will find some old Greek Tales to which people of all ages have loved to listen, since they were first told many hundreds of years ago.

These tales were told for children by a famous man called Hawthorne, who lived in America: but he meant them for older children than you are. So I have gone over them, and have changed all the big words which you would not understand, and I have made some of the sentences easier: and now I hope you will be able to enjoy every word in the book.

But I have not changed anything else; in every other way these Greek Tales remain just as Hawthorne wrote them, and I hope they will give you as much pleasure as they have given to the

bigger children for whom they were written.

C.E. SMITH.

# CHAPTER 1
# Pandora

Long, long ago, when this old world was still very young, there lived a child named Epimetheus. He had neither father nor mother, and to keep him company, a little girl, who was fatherless and motherless like himself, was sent from a far country to live with him and be his playfellow. This child's name was Pandora.

The first thing that Pandora saw, when she came to the cottage where Epimetheus lived, was a great wooden box. 'What have you got in that box, Epimetheus?' she asked.

'That is a secret,' answered

Epimetheus, 'and you must not ask any questions about it: the box was left here for safety, and I do not know what is in it.'

'But who gave it you?' asked Pandora, 'and where did it come from?'

'That is a secret too,' answered Epimetheus.

'How tiresome!' exclaimed Pandora, pouting her lip. 'I wish the great ugly box were out of the way': and she looked very cross.

'Come along, and let us play games,' said Epimetheus ; 'do not let us think any more about it'; and they ran out to play with the other children, and for a while Pandora forgot all about the box.

But when she came back to the cottage, there it was in front of her and, instead of paying no heed to it, she began to say to herself, 'Whatever can be inside it? I wish I just knew who brought it!

Dear Epimetheus, do tell me; I know I cannot be happy till you tell me all about it.'

Then Epimetheus grew a little angry. 'How can I tell you, Pandora?' he said, 'I do not know any more than you do.'

'Well, you could open it,' said Pandora, 'and we could see for ourselves!'

But Epimetheus looked so shocked at the very idea of opening a box that had been given to him in trust, that Pandora saw she had better not suggest such a thing again.

'At least you can tell me how it came here,' she said.

'It was left at the door,' answered Epimetheus, 'just before you came, by a queer person dressed in a very strange cloak: he had a cap that seemed to be partly made of feathers. It looked exactly as if he had wings.'

'What kind of a staff had he?' asked

Pandora.

'Oh, the most curious staff you ever saw,' cried Epimetheus: 'it seemed like two serpents twisted round a stick.'

'I know him,' said Pandora thoughtfully. 'It was Mercury, and he brought me here as well as the box. I am sure he meant the box for me, and perhaps there are pretty clothes in it for us to wear, and toys for us both to play with.'

'It may be so,' answered Epimetheus, turning away; 'but until Mercury comes back and tells us that we may open it, neither of us has any right to lift the lid': and he went out of the cottage.

'What a stupid boy he is!' muttered Pandora: 'I do wish he had a little more spirit.' Then she stood gazing at the box. She had called it ugly a hundred times, but it was really a very handsome box, and would have been an ornament in any room.

It was made of beautiful dark wood, so dark and so highly polished that Pandora could see her face in it. The edges and the corners were wonderfully carved. On these were faces of lovely women, and of the prettiest children, who seemed to be playing among the leaves and flowers. But the most beautiful face of all was one which had a wreath of flowers about its brow. All around it was the dark, smooth-polished wood with this strange face looking out from it, and some days Pandora thought it was laughing at her, while at other times it had a very grave look which made her rather afraid.

The box was not fastened with a lock and key like most boxes, but with a strange knot of gold cord. There never was a knot so queerly tied: it seemed to have no end and no beginning, but was twisted so cunningly, with so many ins and outs, that not even the cleverest

fingers could undo it.

Pandora began to examine the knot just to see how it was made. 'I really believe,' she said to herself, 'that I begin to see how it is done; I am sure I could tie it up again after undoing it. There could be no harm in that: I need not open the box even if I undo the knot.' And the longer she looked at it, the more she wanted just to try.

So she took the gold cord in her fingers and examined it very closely. Then she raised her head, and happening to glance at the flower-wreathed face, she thought it was grinning at her. 'I wonder whether it is smiling because I am doing wrong,' thought Pandora. 'I have a good mind to leave the box alone and run away.'

But just at that moment, as if by accident, she gave the knot a little shake, and the gold cord untwisted itself as if by

magic, and there was the box without any fastening.

'This is the strangest thing I have ever known,' said Pandora, rather frightened. 'What will Epimetheus say? How can I possibly tie it up again.'

She tried once or twice, but the knot would not come right: it had untied itself so suddenly she could not remember in the least how the cord had been twisted together. So there was nothing to be done but to let the box remain unfastened until Epimetheus should come home.

'But,' thought Pandora, 'when he finds the knot untied he will know that I have done it: how shall I ever make him believe that I have not looked into the box?' And then the naughty thought came into her head that, as Epimetheus would believe that she had looked into the box, she might just as well have a

little peep.

She looked at the face with the wreath, and it seemed to smile at her invitingly, as much as to say, 'Do not be afraid; what harm can there possibly be in raising the lid for a moment?' And then she thought she heard voices inside, tiny voices that whispered, 'Let us out, dear Pandora, do let us out: we want very much to play with you if you will only let us out.'

'What can it be?' said Pandora. 'Is there something alive in the box? Yes, I must just see; only one little peep and the lid will be shut down as safely as ever. There cannot really be any harm in just one little peep.'

All this time Epimetheus had been playing with the other children in the fields, but he did not feel happy. This was the first time he had played without Pandora, and he was so cross and discon-

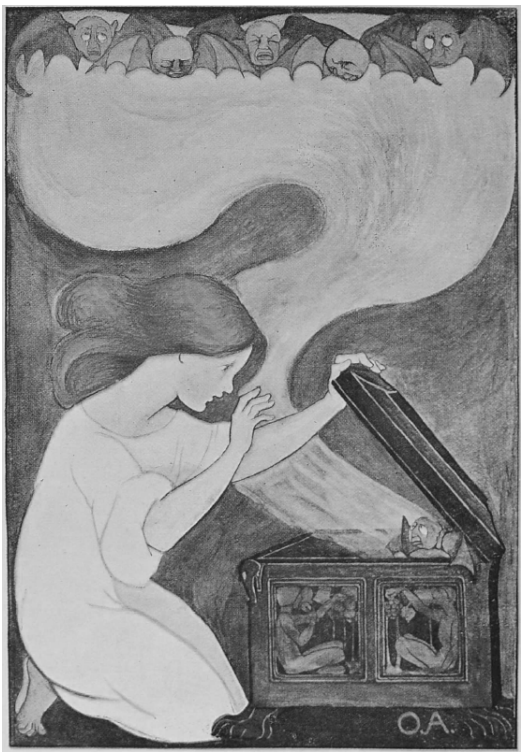
tented that the other children could not think what was the matter with him. You see, up to this time everybody in the world had always been happy: no one had ever been ill, or naughty, or miserable: the world was new and beautiful, and the people who lived in it did not know what trouble meant. So Epimetheus could not understand what was the matter with himself, and he stopped trying to play games and went back to Pandora.

On the way home he gathered a bunch of lovely roses, and lilies, and orange-blossoms, and with these he made a wreath to give Pandora, who was very fond of flowers. He noticed there was a great black cloud in the sky, which was creeping nearer and nearer to the sun, and just as Epimetheus reached the cottage door the cloud went right over the sun and made everything look dark

and sad.

Epimetheus went in quietly, for he wanted to surprise Pandora with the wreath of flowers. And what do you think he saw? The naughty little girl had put her hand on the lid of the box and was just going to open it. Epimetheus saw this quite well, and if he had cried out at once it would have given Pandora such a fright she would have let go the lid. But Epimetheus was very naughty too. Although he had said very little about the box, he was just as curious as Pandora was to see what was inside: if they really found anything pretty or valuable in it, he meant to take half of it for himself; so that he was just as naughty, and nearly as much to blame as his companion.

When Pandora raised the lid, the cottage had grown very dark, for the black cloud now covered the sun entirely and a heavy peal of thunder was heard.


O.A.

But Pandora was too busy and excited to notice this: she lifted the lid right up, and at once a swarm of creatures with wings flew out of the box, and a minute after she heard Epimetheus crying loudly, 'Oh, I am stung, I am stung! You naughty Pandora, why did you open this wicked box?'

Pandora let the lid fall with a crash and started up to find out what had happened to her playmate. The thundercloud had made the room so dark that she could scarcely see, but she heard a loud buzz-buzzing, as if a great many huge flies had flown in, and soon she saw a crowd of ugly little shapes darting about, with wings like bats and with terribly long stings in their tails. It was one of these that had stung Epimetheus, and it was not long before Pandora herself began to scream with pain and fear. An ugly little monster had settled on her

forehead, and would have stung her badly had not Epimetheus run forward and brushed it away.

Now I must tell you that these ugly creatures with stings, which had escaped from the box, were the whole family of earthly troubles. There were evil tempers, and a great many kinds of cares: and there were more than a hundred and fifty sorrows, and there were diseases in many painful shapes. In fact all the sorrows and worries that hurt people in the world today had been shut up in the magic-box, and given to Epimetheus and Pandora to keep safely, in order that the happy children in the world might never be troubled by them. If only these two had obeyed Mercury and had left the box alone as he told them, all would have gone well.

But you see what mischief they had done. The winged troubles flew out at

the window and went all over the world: and they made people so unhappy that no one smiled for a great many days. It was very strange, too, that from this day flowers began to fade, and after a short time they died, whereas in the old times, before Pandora opened the box, they had been always fresh and beautiful.

Meanwhile Pandora and Epimetheus remained in the cottage: they were very miserable and in great pain, which made them both exceedingly cross. Epimetheus sat down sullenly in a corner with his back to Pandora, while Pandora flung herself on the floor and cried bitterly, resting her head on the lid of the fatal box.

Suddenly, she heard a gentle *tap-tap* inside. 'What can that be?' said Pandora, raising her head; and again came the *tap, tap*. It sounded like the knuckles of a tiny hand knocking lightly on the inside of

the box.

'Who are you?' asked Pandora.

A sweet little voice came from inside, 'Only lift the lid and you will see.'

But Pandora was afraid to lift the lid again. She looked across to Epimetheus, but he was so cross that he took no notice. Pandora sobbed, 'No, no, I am afraid; there are so many troubles with stings flying about that we do not want any more.'

'Ah, but I am not one of these,' the sweet voice said: 'they are no relations of mine. Come, come, dear Pandora, I am sure you will let me out.'

The voice sounded so kind and cheery that it made Pandora feel better even to listen to it. Epimetheus too had heard the voice. He stopped crying. Then he came forward, and said, 'Let me help you, Pandora, as the lid is very heavy.'

So this time both the children opened the box, and out flew a bright, smiling little fairy, who brought light and sunshine with her. She flew to Epimetheus and with her finger touched his brow where the trouble had stung him, and immediately the pain was gone.

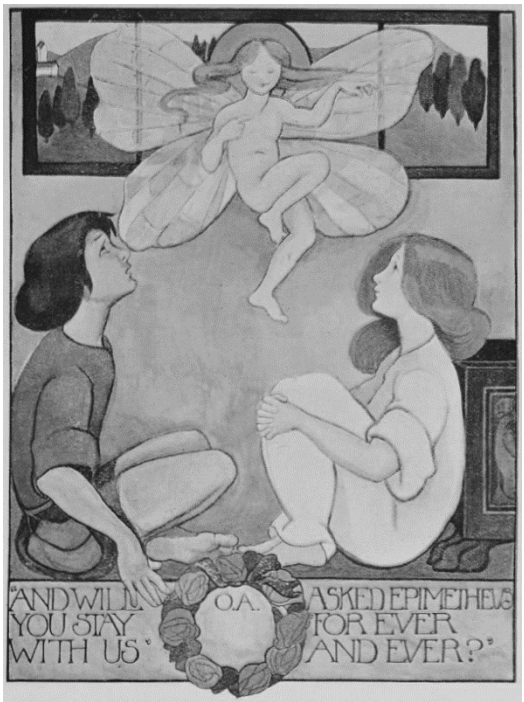
Then she kissed Pandora, and her hurt was better at once.

'Pray who are you, kind fairy?' Pandora asked.

'I am called Hope,' answered the sunshiny figure. 'I was shut up in the box so that I might be ready to comfort people when the family of troubles got loose in the world.'

'What lovely wings you have! They are just like a rainbow. And will you stay with us,' asked Epimetheus, 'for ever and ever?'

'Yes,' said Hope, 'I shall stay with you as long as you live. Sometimes you will


"AND WILL YOU STAY WITH US"
O.A.
ASKED EPIMETHEUS FOR EVER AND EVER?"

not be able to see me, and you may think I am dead, but you will find that I come back again and again when you have given up expecting me, and you must always trust my promise that I will never really leave you.'

'Yes, we do trust you,' cried both children. And all the rest of their lives when the troubles came back and buzzed about their heads and left bitter stings of pain, Pandora and Epimetheus would remember whose fault it was that the troubles had ever come into the world at all, and they would then wait patiently till the fairy with the rainbow wings came back to heal and comfort them.

# CHAPTER 2
# Baucis

One evening, in times long ago, old Philemon and his wife Baucis sat at their cottage door watching the sunset. They had eaten their supper and were enjoying a quiet talk about their garden, and their cow, and the fruit trees on which the pears and apples were beginning to ripen. But their talk was very much disturbed by rude shouts and laughter from the village children, and by the fierce barking of dogs.

'I fear, wife,' said Philemon, 'that some poor traveller is asking for a bed in the village, and that these rough people have set the dogs on him.'

'Well, I never,' answered old Baucis. 'I do wish the neighbours would be kinder to poor wanderers: I feel that some terrible punishment will happen to this village if the people are so wicked as to make fun of those who are tired and hungry. As for you and me, so long as we have a crust of bread, let us always be willing to give half of it to any poor homeless stranger that may come along.'

'Indeed, that we will,' said Philemon. These old folks, you must know, were very poor, and had to work hard for a living. They seldom had anything to eat except bread and milk, and vegetables, with sometimes a little honey from their beehives, or a few ripe pears and apples from their little garden. But they were two of the kindest old people in the world, and would have gone without their dinner any day, rather than refuse a slice of bread or a cupful of milk to the

weary traveller who might stop at the door.

Their cottage stood on a little hill a short way from the village, which lay in a valley: such a pretty valley, shaped like a cup, with plenty of green fields and gardens, and fruit trees; it was a pleasure just to look at it. But the people who lived in this lovely place were selfish and hard-hearted: they had no pity for the poor, and were unkind to those who had no home, and they only laughed when Philemon said it was right to be gentle to people who were sad and friendless.

These wicked villagers taught their children to be as bad as themselves: they used to clap their hands and make fun of poor travellers who were tramping wearily from one village to another, and they even taught the dogs to snarl and bark at strangers if their clothes were shabby. So the village was known far and near as a

bad place, where neither help nor pity was to be found.

What made it worse, too, was that when rich people came in their carriages, or riding on fine horses, with servants to attend to them, the village people would take off their hats and be very polite and attentive: and if the children were rude they got their ears boxed: as to the dogs —if a single dog dared to growl at a rich man he was beaten and then tied up without any supper.

So now you can understand why old Philemon spoke sadly when he heard the shouts of the children, and the barking of the dogs, at the far end of the village street.

He and Baucis sat shaking their heads while the noise came nearer and nearer, until they saw two travellers coming along the road on foot. A crowd of rude children were following them,

shouting and throwing stones, and several dogs were snarling at the travellers' heels.

They were both very plainly dressed, and looked as if they might not have enough money to pay for a night's lodging.

'Come, wife,' said Philemon, 'let us go and meet these poor people and offer them shelter.'

'You go,' said Baucis, 'while I make ready some supper,' and she hastened indoors.

Philemon went down the road, and holding out his hand to the two men, he said, 'Welcome, strangers, welcome.'

'Thank you,' answered the younger of the two travellers. 'Yours is a kind welcome, very different from the one we got in the village: pray why do you live in such a bad place?'

'I think,' answered Philemon, 'that

Providence put me here just to make up as best I can for other people's unkindness.'

The traveller laughed heartily, and Philemon was glad to see him in such good spirits. He took a good look at him and his companion. The younger man was very thin, and was dressed in an odd kind of way. Though it was a summer evening, he wore a cloak which was wrapped tightly about him; and he had a cap on his head, the brim of which stuck out over both ears. There was something queer too about his shoes, but as it was getting dark, Philemon could not see exactly what they were like.

One thing struck Philemon very much: the traveller was so wonderfully light and active that it seemed as if his feet were only kept close to the ground with difficulty. He had a staff in his hand which was the oddest-looking staff Phile-

mon had seen. It was made of wood and had a little pair of wings near the top. Two snakes cut into the wood were twisted round the staff, and these were so well carved that Philemon almost thought he could see them wriggling.

The older man was very tall, and walked calmly along, taking no notice either of naughty children or yelping dogs.

When they reached the cottage gate, Philemon said, 'We are very poor folk, but you are welcome to whatever we have in the cupboard. My wife Baucis has gone to see what you can have for supper.'

They sat down on the bench, and the younger stranger let his staff fall as he threw himself down on the grass: and then a strange thing happened. The staff seemed to get up from the ground of its own accord, and it opened a little pair of

wings and half-hopped, half-flew and leaned itself against the wall of the cottage.

Philemon was so amazed that he feared he had been dreaming, but before he could ask any questions, the elder stranger said: 'Was there not a lake long ago covering the spot where the village now stands?'

'Never in my day,' said old Philemon, 'nor in my father's nor my grandfather's: there were always fields and meadows just as there are now, and I suppose there always will be.'

'That I am not so sure of,' replied the stranger. 'Since the people in that village have forgotten how to be loving and gentle, it were maybe better that the lake should be rippling over the cottages again,' and he looked very sad and stern.

He was a very important-looking man, Philemon felt, even though his

clothes were old and shabby: maybe he was some great learned stranger who did not care at all for money or clothes, and was wandering about the world seeking wisdom and knowledge. Philemon was quite sure he was not a common person. But he talked so kindly to Philemon, and the younger traveller made such funny remarks, that they were all constantly laughing.

'Pray, my young friend, what is your name?' Philemon asked.

'Well,' answered the younger man, 'I am called Mercury, because I am so quick.'

'What a strange name!' said Philemon; 'and your friend, what is he called?'

'You must ask the thunder to tell you that,' said Mercury, 'no other voice is loud enough.'

Philemon was a little confused at this answer, but the stranger looked so kind

and friendly that he began to tell them about his good old wife, and what fine butter and cheese she made: and how happy they were in their little garden: and how they loved each other very dearly and hoped they might live together till they died. And the stern stranger listened with a sweet smile on his face.

Baucis had now got supper ready: not very much of a supper, she told them. There was only half a brown loaf and a bit of cheese, a pitcher with some milk, a little honey, and a bunch of purple grapes. But she said, 'Had we only known you were coming, my goodman and I would have gone without anything in order to give you a better supper.'

'Do not trouble,' said the elder stranger kindly. 'A hearty welcome is better than the finest of food, and we are so hungry that what you have to offer us seems a feast.' Then they all went into

the cottage.

And now I must tell you something that will make your eyes open. You remember that Mercury's staff was leaning against the cottage wall? Well, when its owner went in at the door, what should this wonderful staff do but spread its little wings and go hop-hop, flutter-flutter up the steps: then it went *tap-tap* across the kitchen floor and did not stop till it stood close behind Mercury's chair. No one noticed this, as Baucis and her husband were too busy attending to their guests.

Baucis filled up two bowls of milk from the pitcher, while her husband cut the loaf and the cheese. 'What delightful milk, Mother Baucis,' said Mercury: 'may I have some more? This has been such a hot day that I am very thirsty.'

'Oh dear, I am so sorry and ashamed,' answered Baucis, 'but the truth is there is hardly another drop of milk in the

pitcher.'

'Let me see,' said Mercury, starting up and catching hold of the handles: 'why here is certainly more milk in the pitcher.' He poured out a bowlful for himself and another for his companion. Baucis could scarcely believe her eyes. 'I suppose I must have made a mistake,' she thought, 'at any rate the pitcher must be empty now after filling both bowls twice over.'

'Excuse me, my kind hostess,' said Mercury in a little while, 'but your milk is so good that I should very much like another bowlful.'

Now Baucis was perfectly sure that the pitcher was empty, and in order to show Mercury that there was not another drop in it, she held it upside down over his bowl. What was her surprise when a stream of fresh milk fell bubbling into the bowl and overflowed on to the


O. A.
HERE IS CERTAINLY MORE MILK IN THE PITCHER.

table, and the two snakes that were twisted round Mercury's staff stretched out their heads and began to lap it up.

'And now, a slice of your brown loaf, pray Mother Baucis, and a little honey,' asked Mercury.

Baucis handed the loaf, and though it had been rather a hard and dry loaf when she and her husband ate some at tea-time, it was now as soft and new as if it had just come from the oven. As to the honey, it had become the colour of new gold and had the scent of a thousand flowers, and the small grapes in the bunch had grown larger and richer, and each one seemed bursting with ripe juice.

Although Baucis was a very simple old woman, she could not help thinking that there was something rather strange going on. She sat down beside Philemon and told him in a whisper what she had seen.

'Did you ever hear anything so wonderful?' she asked.

'No, I never did,' answered Philemon, with a smile. 'I fear you have been in a dream, my dear old wife.'

He knew Baucis could not say what was untrue, but he thought that she had not noticed how much milk there had really been in the pitcher at first. So when Mercury once more asked for a little milk, Philemon rose and lifted the pitcher himself. He peeped in and saw that there was not a drop in it: then all at once a little white fountain gushed up from the bottom, and the pitcher was soon filled to the brim with delicious milk.

Philemon was so amazed that he nearly let the jug fall. 'Who are ye, wonder-working strangers?' he cried.

'Your guests, good Philemon, and your friends,' answered the elder

traveller, 'and may the pitcher never be empty for kind Baucis and yourself any more than for the hungry traveller.'

The old people did not like to ask any more questions: they gave the guests their own sleeping-room, and then they lay down on the hard floor in the kitchen. It was long before they fell asleep, not because they thought how hard their bed was, but because there was so much to whisper to each other about the wonderful strangers and what they had done.

They all rose with the sun next morning. Philemon begged the visitors to stay a little till Baucis should milk the cow and bake some bread for breakfast. But the travellers seemed to be in a hurry and wished to start at once, and they asked Baucis and Philemon to go with them a short distance to show them the way.

So they all four set out together, and

Mercury was so full of fun and laughter, and made them feel so happy and bright, that they would have been glad to keep him in their cottage all day and every day long.

'Ah me,' said Philemon, 'if only our neighbours knew what a pleasure it was to be kind to strangers, they would tie up all their dogs and never allow the children to fling another stone.'

'It is a sin and shame for them to behave so,' said Baucis, 'and I mean to go this very day and tell some of them how wicked they are.'

'I fear,' said Mercury, smiling, 'that you will not find any of them at home.'

The old people looked at the elder traveller and his face had grown very grave and stern. 'When men do not feel towards the poorest stranger as if he were a brother,' he said, in a deep, grave voice, 'they are not worthy to remain on the

earth, which was made just to be the home for the whole family of the human race of men and women and children.'

'And, by the bye,' said Mercury, with a look of fun and mischief in his eyes, 'where is this village you talk about? I do not see anything of it.'

Philemon and his wife turned towards the valley, where at sunset only the day before they had seen the trees and gardens, and the houses, and the streets with the children playing in them. But there was no longer any sign of the village. There was not even a valley. Instead, they saw a broad lake which filled all the great basin from brim to brim, and whose waters glistened and sparkled in the morning sun.

The village that had been there only yesterday was now gone!

'Alas! what has become of our poor neighbours,' cried the kind-hearted old

people?

'They are not men and women any longer,' answered the elder traveller, in a deep voice like distant thunder. 'There was no beauty and no use in lives such as theirs, for they had no love for one another, and no pity in their hearts for those who were poor and weary. Therefore the lake that was here in the old, old days has flowed over them, and they will be men and women no more.'

'Yes,' said Mercury, with his mischievous smile, 'these foolish people have all been changed into fishes, because they had cold blood which never warmed their hearts, just as the fishes have.'

'As for you, good Philemon, and you, kind Baucis,' said the elder traveller, 'you, indeed, gave a hearty welcome to the homeless strangers. You have done well, my dear old friends, and whatever

wish you have most at heart will be granted.'

Philemon and Baucis looked at one another, and then I do not know which spoke, but it seemed as if the voice came from them both. 'Let us live together while we live, and let us die together, at the same time, for we have always loved one another?'

'Be it so,' said the elder stranger, and he held out his hands as if to bless them. The old couple bent their heads and fell on their knees to thank him, and when they lifted their eyes again neither Mercury nor his companion was to be seen.

So Philemon and Baucis returned to the cottage, and to every traveller who passed that way they offered a drink of milk from the wonderful pitcher: and if the guest was a kind, gentle soul, he found the milk the sweetest and most refreshing he had ever tasted. But if a cross,

bad-tempered fellow took even a sip, he found the pitcher full of sour milk, which made him twist his face with dislike and disappointment.

Baucis and Philemon lived a great, great many years and grew very old. And one summer morning when their friends came to share their breakfast, neither Baucis nor Philemon was to be found!

The guests looked everywhere, and all in vain. Then suddenly one of them noticed two beautiful, big trees in the garden, just in front of the door. One was an oak tree and the other a linden tree, and their branches were twisted together so that they seemed to be embracing.

No one had ever seen these trees before, and while they were all wondering how such fine trees could possibly have grown up in a single night, there came a gentle wind which set the branches moving, and then a mysterious

voice was heard coming from the oak tree. 'I am old Philemon,' it said: and again another voice whispered, 'And I am Baucis.'

And the people knew that the good old couple would live for a hundred years or more in the heart of these lovely trees. And oh, what a pleasant shade they flung around! Some kind soul built a seat under the branches, and whenever a traveller sat down to rest he heard a pleasant whisper of the leaves over his head, and he wondered why the sound should seem to say, 'Welcome, dear traveller, welcome.'

# CHAPTER 3
# Cadmus

Cadmus, Phœnix, and Cilix, the three sons of King Agenor, were playing near the sea-shore in their father's kingdom of Phœnicia, and their little sister Europa was beside them.

They had wandered to some distance from the King's palace and were now in a green field, on one side of which lay the sea, sparkling brightly in the sunshine, and with little waves breaking on the shore.

The three boys were very happy gathering flowers and making wreaths for their sister Europa. The little girl was almost hidden under the flowers and

leaves, and her rosy face peeped merrily out among them. She was really the prettiest flower of them all.

While they were busy and happy, a beautiful butterfly came flying past, and the three boys, crying out that it was a flower with wings, set off to try to catch it.

Europa did not run after them. She was a little tired with playing all day long, so she sat still on the green grass and very soon she closed her eyes.

For a time she listened to the sea, which sounded, she thought, just like a voice saying, 'Hush, hush,' and telling her to go to sleep. But if she slept at all it was only for a minute. Then she heard something tramping on the grass and, when she looked up, there was a snow-white bull quite close to her!

Where could he have come from? Europa was very frightened, and she

started up from among the tulips and lilies and cried out, 'Cadmus, brother Cadmus, where are you? Come and drive this bull away! But her brother was too far off to hear her, and Europa was so frightened that her voice did not sound very loud; so there she stood with her blue eyes big with fear, and her pretty red mouth wide open, and her face as pale as the lilies that were lying on her golden hair.

As the bull did not touch her she began to peep at him, and she saw that he was a very beautiful animal; she even fancied he looked quite a kind bull. He had soft, tender, brown eyes, and horns as smooth and white as ivory: and when he breathed you could feel the scent of rosebuds and clover blossoms in the air.

The bull ran little races round Europa and allowed her to stroke his forehead with her small hands, and to hang

wreaths of flowers on his horns. He was just like a pet lamb, and very soon Europa quite forgot how big and strong he really was and how frightened she had been. She pulled some grass and he ate it out of her hand and seemed quite pleased to be friends. He ran up and down the field as lightly as a bird hopping in a tree; his hoofs scarcely seemed to touch the grass, and once when he galloped a good long way Europa was afraid she would not see him again, and she called out, 'Come back, you dear bull, I have got you a pink clover-blossom.' Then he came running and bowed his head before Europa as if he knew she was a King's daughter, and knelt down at her feet, inviting her to get on his back and have a ride.

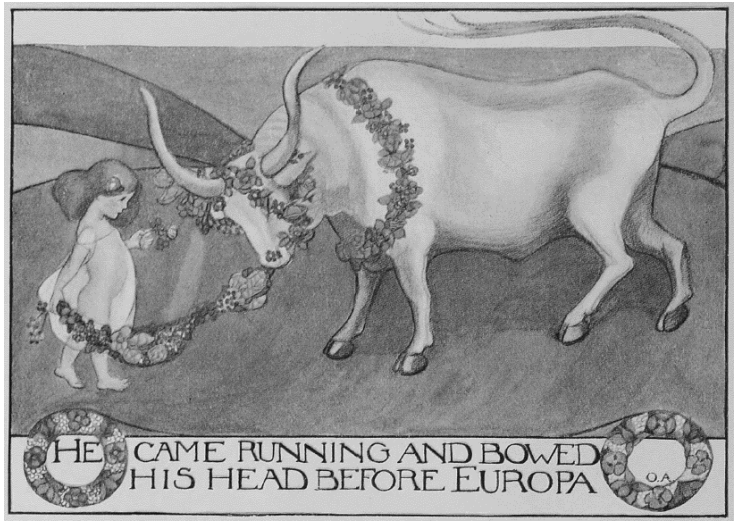
At first Europa was afraid: then she thought there could surely be no danger in having just one ride on the back of such a gentle animal, and the more she

thought about it, the more she wanted to go.

What a surprise it would be to Cadmus, and Phœnix, and Cilix if they met her riding across the green field, and what fun it would be if they could all four ride round and round the field on the back of this beautiful white bull that was so tame and kind!

'I think I will do it,' she said, and she looked round the field. Cadmus and his brothers were still chasing the butterfly away at the far end. 'If I got on the bull's back I should soon be beside them,' she thought. So she moved nearer, and the gentle white creature looked so pleased, and so kind, she could not resist any longer, and with a light bound she sprang up on his back: and there she sat holding an ivory horn in each hand to keep her steady.

'Go very gently, good bull,' she said,


HE CAME RUNNING AND BOWED
HIS HEAD BEFORE EUROPA
O.A.

and the animal gave a little leap in the air and came down as lightly as a feather. Then he began a race to that part of the field where the brothers were, and where they had just caught the splendid butterfly. Europa shouted with delight, and how surprised the brothers were to see their sister mounted on the back of a white bull!

They stood with their mouths wide open, not sure whether to be frightened or not. But the bull played round them as gently as a kitten, and Europa looked down all rosy and laughing, and they were quite envious. Then when he turned to take another gallop round the field, Europa waved her hand and called out 'Good-bye,' as if she was off for a journey, and Cadmus, Phœnix, and Cilix shouted 'Good-bye' all in one breath. They all thought it such good fun.

And then, what do you think

happened? The white bull set off as quickly as before, and ran straight down to the seashore. He scampered across the sand, then he took a big leap and plunged right in among the waves. The white spray rose in a shower all over him and Europa, and the poor child screamed with fright. The brothers ran as fast as they could to the edge of the water, but it was too late.

The white bull swam very fast and was soon far away in the wide blue sea, with only his snowy head and tail showing above the water. Poor Europa was holding on with one hand to the ivory horn and stretching the other back towards her dear brothers.

And there stood Cadmus and Phœnix and Cilix looking after her and crying bitterly, until they could no longer see the white head among the waves that sparkled in the sunshine.

Nothing more could be seen of the white bull, and nothing more of their beautiful sister.

This was a sad tale for the three boys to carry back to their parents. King Agenor loved his little girl Europa more than his kingdom or anything else in the world: and when Cadmus came home crying and told how a white bull had carried off his sister, the King was very angry and full of grief.

'You shall never see my face again,' he cried, 'unless you bring back my little Europa. Begone, and enter my presence no more till you come leading her by the hand,' and his eyes flashed fire and he looked so terribly angry that the poor boys did not even wait for supper, but stole out of the palace, wondering where they should go first.

While they were standing at the gate, the Queen came hurrying after them.

'Dear children,' she said, 'I will come with you.'

'Oh no, mother,' the boys answered, 'it is a dark night, and there is no knowing what troubles we may meet with: the blame is ours, and we had better go alone.'

'Alas!' said the poor Queen, weeping, 'Europa is lost, and if I should lose my three sons as well, what would become of me? I must go with my children.'

The boys tried to persuade her to stay at home, but the Queen cried so bitterly that they had to let her go with them.

Just as they were about to start, their playfellow Theseus came running to join them. He loved Europa very much, and longed to search for her too. So the five set off together: the Queen, and Cadmus, and Phœnix, and Cilix, and Theseus, and the last they heard was King Agenor's angry voice saying, 'Remember

this, never may you come up these steps again, till you bring back my little daughter.'

The Queen and her young companions travelled many a weary mile: the days grew to months, and the months became years, and still they found no trace of the lost Princess. Their clothes were worn and shabby, and the peasant people looked curiously at them when they asked, 'Have you seen a snow-white bull with a little Princess on its back, riding as swiftly as the wind?'

And the farmers would answer, 'We have many bulls in our fields, but none that would allow a little Princess to ride on its back: we have never seen such a sight.'

At last Phœnix grew weary of the search. 'I do not believe Europa will ever be found, and I shall stay here,' he said one day when they came to a pleasant

spot. So the others helped him to build a small hut to live in, then they said good-bye and went on without him.

Then Cilix grew tired too. 'It is so many years now since Europa was carried away that she would not know me if I found her. I shall wait here,' he said. So Cadmus and Theseus built a hut for him too, and then said good-bye.

After many long months Theseus broke his ankle, and he too had to be left behind, and once more the Queen and Cadmus wandered on to continue the search.

The poor Queen was worn and sad, and she leaned very heavily on her son's arm. 'Cadmus,' she said one day, 'I must stay and rest.'

'Why, yes, mother, of course you shall, a long, long rest you must have, and I will sit beside you and watch.'

But the Queen knew she could go no

further. 'Cadmus,' she said, 'you must leave me here, and go to the wise woman at Delphi and ask her what you must do next. Promise me you will go!'

And Cadmus promised. The tired Queen lay down to rest, and in the morning Cadmus found that she was dead, and he must journey on alone.

He wandered for many days till he came in sight of a high mountain which the people told him was called Parnassus, and on the steep side of this mountain was the famous city of Delphi for which he was looking. The wise woman lived far up the mountain-side, in a hut like those he had helped his brothers to build by the roadside.

When he pushed aside the branches he found himself in a low cave, with a hole in the wall through which a strong wind was blowing. He bent down and put his mouth to the hole and said, 'O sacred

goddess, tell me where I must look now for my dear sister Europa, who was carried off so long ago by a bull?'

At first there was no answer. Then a voice said softly, three times, 'Seek her no more, seek her no more, seek her no more.'

'What shall I do, then?' said Cadmus. And the answer came, in a hoarse voice, 'Follow the cow, follow the cow, follow the cow.'

'But what cow,' cried Cadmus, 'and where shall I follow?'

And once more the voice came, 'Where the stray cow lies down, there is your home'; and then there was silence.

'Have I been dreaming?' Cadmus thought, 'or did I really hear a voice?' and he went away thinking he was very little wiser for having done as the Queen had told him.

I do not know how far he had gone

when just before him he saw a brindled cow. She was lying down by the wayside, and as Cadmus came along she got up and began to move slowly along the path, stopping now and then to crop a mouthful of grass.

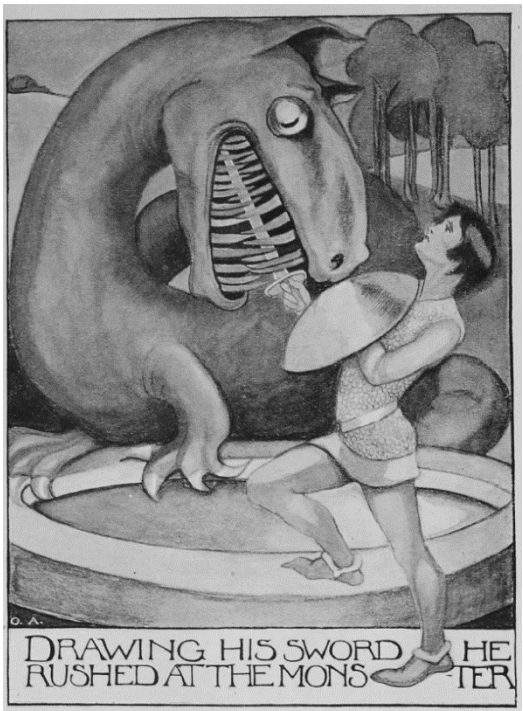
Cadmus wondered if this could be the cow he was to follow, and he thought he would look at her more closely, so he walked a little faster; but so did the cow. 'Stop, cow,' he cried, 'hey, brindle, stop,' and he began to run: and much to his surprise so did the cow, and though he ran as hard as possible, he could not overtake her.

So he gave it up. 'I do believe this may be the cow I was told about,' he thought. 'Any way, I may as well follow her and surely she will lie down somewhere.'

On and on they went. Cadmus thought the cow would never stop, and

other people who had heard the strange story began to follow too, and they were all very tired and very far away from home when at last the cow lay down. His companions were delighted and began to cut down wood to make a fire, and some ran to a stream to get water. Cadmus lay down to rest close beside the cow. He was wishing that his mother and brothers and Theseus had been with him now, when suddenly he was startled by cries and shouts and screams.

He ran towards the stream, and there he saw the head of a big serpent or dragon, with fiery eyes and with wide open jaws which showed rows and rows of horrible sharp teeth. Before Cadmus could reach it, the monster had killed all his poor companions and was busy devouring them. The stream was an enchanted one, and the dragon had been told to guard it so that no mortal might




DRAWING HIS SWORD HE RUSHED AT THE MONSTER

ever touch the water, and the people round about knew this, so that for a hundred years none of them had ever come near the spot.

The dragon had been asleep and was very hungry, and when he saw Cadmus he opened his huge jaws again, ready to devour him too. But Cadmus was very angry at the death of all his companions, and drawing his sword he rushed at the monster. With one big bound he leaped right into the dragon's mouth, so far down that the two rows of terrible teeth could not close on him or do him any harm. The dragon lashed with his tail furiously, but Cadmus stabbed him again and again, and in a short time the great monster lay dead.

'What shall I do now?' he said aloud. All his companions were dead, and he was alone once more. 'Cadmus,' said a voice, 'pluck out the dragon's teeth and

plant them in the earth.'

Cadmus looked round and there was nobody to be seen. But he set to work and cut out the huge teeth with his sword, and then he made little holes in the ground and planted the teeth. In a few minutes the earth was covered with rows of armed men, fierce-looking soldiers with swords and helmets who stood looking at Cadmus in silence.

'Throw a stone among these men,' came the voice again, and Cadmus obeyed. At once all the men began to fight, and they cut and stabbed each other so furiously that in a short time only five remained alive out of all the hundreds that had stood before him. 'Cadmus,' said the voice once more, 'tell these men to stop fighting and help you to build a palace.' And as soon as Cadmus spoke, the five big men sheathed their swords, and they began to carry

stones, and to carve these for Cadmus, as if they had never thought of such a thing as fighting each other!

They built a house for each of themselves, and there was a beautiful palace for Cadmus made of marble, and of fine kinds of red and green stone, and there was a high tower with a flag floating from a tall gold flag-post.

When everything was ready, Cadmus went to take possession of his new house, and, as he entered the great hall, he saw a lady coming slowly towards him. She was very lovely and she wore a royal robe which shone like sunbeams, with a crown of stars on her golden hair, and round her neck was a string of the fairest pearls.

Cadmus was full of delight. Could this be his long lost sister Europa coming to make him happy after all these weary years of searching and wandering?

How much he had to tell her about

Phœnix, and Cilix, and dear Theseus and of the poor Queen's lonely grave in the wilderness! But as he went forward to meet the beautiful lady he saw she was a stranger. He was thinking what he should say to her, when once again he heard the unknown voice speak.

'No, Cadmus,' it said, 'this is not your dear sister whom you have sought so faithfully all over the wide world. This is Harmonia, a daughter of the sky, who is given to you instead of sister and brother, and friend and mother. She is your Queen, and will make happy the home which you have won by so much suffering.'

So King Cadmus lived in the palace with his beautiful Queen, and before many years passed there were rosy little children playing in the great hall, and on the marble steps of the palace, and running joyfully to meet King Cadmus as he

came home from looking after his soldiers and his workmen.

And the five old soldiers that sprang from the dragon's teeth grew very fond of these little children, and they were never tired of showing them how to play with wooden swords and to blow on a penny trumpet, and beat a drum and march like soldiers to battle.

# CHAPTER 4
# Proserpina

Mother Ceres was very fond of her little daughter Proserpina. She did not often let her go alone into the fields for fear she should be lost. But just at the time when my story begins she was very busy. She had to look after the wheat and the corn, and the apples and the pears, all over the world, and as the weather had been bad day after day she was afraid none of them would be ripe when harvest time came.

So this morning Mother Ceres put on her turban made of scarlet poppies and got into her car. This car was drawn by a pair of winged dragons which went very

fast, and Mother Ceres was just ready to start, when Proserpina said, 'Dear mother, I shall be very lonely while you are away, may I run down to the sands, and ask some of the sea-children to come out of the water to play with me?'

'Yes, child, you may,' answered Mother Ceres, 'but you must take care not to stray away from them, and you are not to play in the fields by yourself with no one to take care of you.'

Proserpina promised to remember what her mother said, and by the time the dragons with their big wings had whirled the car out of sight she was already on the shore, calling to the sea-children to come to play with her.

They knew Proserpina's voice and came at once: pretty children with wavy sea-green hair and shining faces, and they sat down on the wet sand where the waves could still break over them, and

began to make a necklace for Proserpina of beautiful shells brought from their home at the bottom of the sea.

Proserpina was so delighted when they hung the necklace round her neck that she wanted to give them something in return. 'Will you come with me into the fields,' she asked, 'and I will gather flowers and make you each a wreath?'

'Oh no, dear Proserpina,' said the sea-children, 'we may not go with you on the dry land. We must keep close beside the sea and let the waves wash over us every minute or two. If it were not for the salt water we should soon look like bunches of dried sea-weed instead of sea-children.'

'That is a great pity,' said Proserpina, 'but if you wait for me here, I will run to the fields and be back again with my apron full of flowers before the waves have broken over you ten times. I long to

make you some wreaths as beautiful as this necklace with all its coloured shells.'

'We will wait, then,' said the sea-children: 'we will lie under the water and pop up our heads every few minutes to see if you are coming.'

Proserpina ran quickly to a field where only the day before she had seen a great many flowers; but the first she came to seemed rather faded, and forgetting what Mother Ceres had told her, she strayed a little farther into the fields. Never before had she found such beautiful flowers! Large sweet-scented violets, purple and white: deep pink roses: hyacinths with the biggest of blue bells: as well as many others she did not know. They seemed to grow up under her feet, and soon her apron was so full that the flowers were falling out of the corners.

Proserpina was just going to turn back to the sands to make the wreaths for

the sea-children, when she cried out with delight. Before her was a bush covered with the most wonderful flowers in the world. 'What beauties!' said Proserpina, and then she thought, 'How strange! I looked at that spot only a moment ago; why did I not see the flowers?'

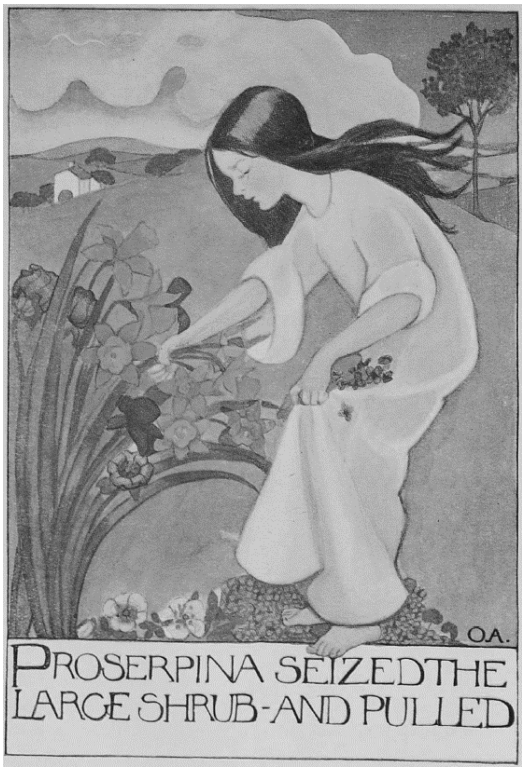
They were such lovely ones too. More than a hundred different kinds grew on the one bush: the brightest, gayest flowers Proserpina had ever seen. But there was a shiny look about them and about the leaves which she did not quite like. Somehow it made her wonder if this was a poison plant, and to tell the truth she was half inclined to turn round and run away.

'How silly I am!' she thought, taking courage: 'it is really the most beautiful bush I ever saw: I will pull it up by the roots and carry it home to plant in mother's garden.'

Holding her apron full of flowers with one hand, Proserpina seized the large shrub with the other and pulled and pulled.

What deep roots that bush had! She pulled again with all her might, and the earth round the roots began to stir and crack: so she gave another big pull, and then she let go. She thought there was a rumbling noise right below her feet, and she wondered if the roots went down to some dragon's cave. Then she tried once again, and up came the bush so quickly that Proserpina nearly fell backwards. There she stood, holding the stem in her hand and looking at the big hole which its roots had left in the earth.

To her surprise this hole began to grow wider and wider, and deeper and deeper, and a rumbling noise came out of it. Louder and louder it grew, nearer and nearer it came, just like the tramp of




PROSERPINA SEIZED THE LARGE SHRUB-AND PULLED

horses' feet and the rattling of wheels.

Proserpina was too frightened now to run away, and soon she saw a wonderful thing. Four black horses, with smoke coming out of their nostrils and with long black tails and flowing black manes, came tearing their way out of the earth, and a splendid golden chariot was rattling at their heels.

The horses leaped out of the hole, chariot and all, and came close to the spot where Proserpina stood.

Then she saw there was a man in the chariot. He was very richly dressed, with a crown on his head all made of diamonds which sparkled like fire. He was a very handsome man, but looked rather cross and discontented, and he kept rubbing his eyes and covering them with his hand, as if he did not care much for the bright sunshine.

As soon as he saw Proserpina, the

man waved to her to come a little nearer. 'Do not be afraid,' he said. 'Come! would you not like to ride a little way with me in my beautiful chariot?'

But Proserpina was very frightened, and no wonder. The stranger did not look a very kind or pleasant man. His voice was so gruff and deep, and sounded just like the rumbling Proserpina had heard underneath the earth.

She at once began to cry out, 'Mother, mother! O Mother Ceres, come quickly and save me!'

But her voice was very shaky and too faint for Mother Ceres to hear, for by this time she was many thousands of miles away making the corn grow in another country.

No sooner did Proserpina begin to cry out than the strange man leaped to the ground: he caught her in his arms and sprang into the chariot: then he

shook the reins and shouted to the four black horses to set off. They began to gallop so fast that it was just like flying, and in less than a minute Proserpina had lost sight of the sunny fields where she and her mother had always lived.

She screamed and screamed and all the beautiful flowers fell out of her apron to the ground.

But Mother Ceres was too far away to know what was happening to her little daughter.

'Why are you so frightened, my little girl?' said the strange man, and he tried to soften his rough voice. 'I promise not to do you any harm. I see you have been gathering flowers? Wait till we come to my palace and I will give you a garden full of prettier flowers than these, all made of diamonds and pearls and rubies. Can you guess who I am? They call me Pluto, and I am the King of the mines where all the

diamonds and rubies and all the gold and silver are found: they all belong to me. Do you see this lovely crown on my head? I will let you have it to play with. Oh, I think we are going to be very good friends when we get out of this troublesome sunshine.'

'Let me go home,' sobbed Proserpina, 'let me go home.'

'My home is better than your mother's,' said King Pluto. 'It is a palace made of gold, with crystal windows and with diamond lamps instead of sunshine; and there is a splendid throne; if you like you may sit on it and be my little Queen, and I will sit on the footstool.'

'I do not care for golden palaces and thrones,' sobbed Proserpina: 'O mother, mother! Take me back to my mother.'

But King Pluto only shouted to his horses to go faster.

'You are very foolish, Proserpina,' he

said, rather crossly. 'I am doing all I can to make you happy, and I want very much to have a merry little girl to run upstairs and downstairs in my palace and make it brighter with her laughter. This is all I ask you to do for King Pluto.'

'Never,' answered Proserpina, looking very miserable. 'I shall never laugh again, till you take me back to my mother's cottage.'

And the horses galloped on, and the wind whistled past the chariot, and Proserpina cried and cried till her poor little voice was almost cried away, and nothing was left but a whisper.

The road now began to get very dull and gloomy. On each side were black rocks and very thick trees and bushes that looked as if they never got any sunshine. It got darker and darker, as if night was coming, and still the black horses rushed on leaving the sunny home of

Mother Ceres far behind.

But the darker it grew, the happier King Pluto seemed to be. Proserpina began to peep at him: she thought he might not be such a wicked man after all.

'Is it much further,' she asked, 'and will you carry me back when I have seen your palace?'

'We will talk of that by and by,' answered Pluto. 'Do you see these big gates? When we pass these we are at home: and look! there is my faithful dog at the door! Cerberus, Cerberus, come here, good dog.'

Pluto pulled the horses' reins, and the chariot stopped between two big, tall pillars. The dog got up and stood on his hind legs, so that he could put his paws on the chariot wheel. What a strange dog he was! A big, rough, ugly-looking monster, with three heads, each fiercer than the other.

King Pluto patted his heads and the dog wagged his tail with delight. Proserpina was much afraid when she saw that his tail was a live dragon, with fiery eyes and big poisonous teeth.

'Will the dog bite me?' she asked, creeping closer to King Pluto. 'How very ugly he is.'

'Oh, never fear,' Pluto answered: 'he never bites people unless they try to come in here when I do not want them. Down, Cerberus. Now, Proserpina, we will drive on.'

The black horses started again and King Pluto seemed very happy to find himself once more at home.

All along the road Proserpina could see diamonds, and rubies and precious stones sparkling, and there were bits of real gold among the rocks. It was a very rich place.

Not far from the gateway they came

to an iron bridge. Pluto stopped the chariot and told Proserpina to look at the river which ran underneath. It was very black and muddy, and flowed slowly, very slowly, as if it had quite forgotten which way it wanted to go, and was in no hurry to flow anywhere.

'This is the river Lethe,' said King Pluto; 'do you not think it a very pleasant stream?'

'I think it is very dismal,' said Proserpina. 'Well, I like it,' answered Pluto, who got rather cross when any one did not agree with him. 'It is a strange kind of river. If you drink only a little sip of the water, you will at once forget all your care and sorrow. When we reach the palace, you shall have some in a golden cup, and then you will not cry any more for your mother, and will be perfectly happy with me!

'Oh no, oh no!' said Proserpina,

sobbing again. 'O mother, mother, I will never forget you; I do not want to be happy by forgetting all about you.'

'We shall see,' said King Pluto; 'you do not know what good times we will have in my palace. Here we are, just at the gate. Look at the big pillars; they are all made of solid gold.'

He got out of the chariot and carried Proserpina in his arms up a long stair into the great hall of the palace. It was beautifully lit by hundreds of diamonds and rubies which shone like lamps. It was very rich and splendid to look at, but it was cold and lonely and Pluto must have longed for some one to keep him company: perhaps that was why he had stolen Proserpina from her sunny home.

King Pluto sent for his servants and told them to get ready a grand supper with all kinds of dainty food and sweet things such as children like. 'And be sure

not to forget a golden cup filled with the water of Lethe,' he said to the servant.

'I will not eat anything,' said Proserpina, 'nor drink a single drop, even if you keep me for ever in your palace.'

'I should be sorry for that,' replied King Pluto. He really wished to be kind if he had only known how. 'Wait till you see the nice things my cook will make for you, and then you will be hungry.'

Now King Pluto had a secret reason why he wanted Proserpina to eat some food. You must understand that when people are carried off to the land of magic, if once they taste any food they can never go back to their friends.

If King Pluto had offered Proserpina some bread and milk she would very likely have taken it as soon as she was hungry, but all the cook's fine pastries and sweets were things she had never seen at home, and, instead of making her

hungry, she was afraid to touch them.

But now my story must leave King Pluto's palace, and we must see what Mother Ceres has been about.

You remember she had gone off in her chariot with the winged dragons to the other side of the world to see how the corn and fruit were growing. And while she was busy in a field she thought she heard Proserpina's voice calling her. She was quite sure her little daughter could not possibly be anywhere near, but the idea troubled her: and presently she left the fields before her work was half done and, ordering her dragons with the chariot, she drove off.

In less than an hour Mother Ceres got down at the door of her cottage. It was empty! At first she thought 'Oh, Proserpina will still be playing on the shore with the sea-children.' So she went to find her.

'Where is Proserpina, you naughty sea-children?' she asked: 'tell me, have you taken her to your home under the sea?'

'Oh no, Mother Ceres,' they said, 'she left us early in the day to gather flowers for a wreath, and we have seen nothing of her since.'

Ceres hurried off to ask all the neighbours. A poor fisherman had seen her little footprints in the sand as he went home with his basket of fish.

A man in the fields had noticed her gathering flowers.

Several persons had heard the rattling of chariot wheels or the rumbling of distant thunder: and one old woman had heard a scream, but supposed it was only in merriment, and had not even looked up.

None of the neighbours knew where Proserpina was, and Mother Ceres

decided she must seek her daughter further from home.

By this time it was night, so she lit a torch and set off, telling the neighbours she would never come back till Proserpina was found. In her hurry she quite forgot her chariot with the dragons: maybe she thought she could search better on foot.

So she started on her sad journey, holding her torch in front of her, and looking carefully along every road and round every corner.

She had not gone very far before she found one of the wonderful flowers which Proserpina had pulled from the poison bush.

'Ha!' said Mother Ceres, examining it carefully, 'there is mischief in this flower: it did not grow in the earth by any help of mine; it is the work of magic, and perhaps it has poisoned my poor child.'

And she hid it in her bosom.

All night long Ceres sought for her daughter. She knocked at the doors of farmhouses where the people were all asleep, and they came to see who was there, rubbing their eyes and yawning. They were very sorry for the poor mother when they heard her tale—but they knew nothing about Proserpina.

At every palace door, too, she knocked, so loudly that the servants ran quickly, expecting to find a great Queen, and when they saw only a sad lonely woman with a burning torch in her hand, and a wreath of withered poppies on her head, they were angry and drove her rudely away.

But nobody had seen Proserpina, and Mother Ceres wandered about till the night was passed, without sitting down to rest, and without taking any food. She did not even remember to put out her

torch, and it looked very pale and small in the bright morning sunshine.

It must have been a magic torch, for it burned dimly all day, and then when night came it shone with a beautiful red light, and neither the wind nor the rain put it out through all these weary days while Ceres sought for Proserpina.

It was not only men and women that Mother Ceres questioned about her daughter. In the woods and by the streams she met other creatures whose way of talking she could understand, and who knew many things that we have never learned.

Sometimes she tapped with her finger against an oak tree, and at once its rough bark would open and a beautiful maiden would appear: she was the spirit of the oak, living inside it, and as happy as could be when its green leaves danced in the breeze.

Then another time Ceres would find a spring bubbling out of a little hole in the earth, and she would play with her fingers in the water. Immediately up though the sandy bed a nymph with dripping hair would rise and float half out of the water, looking at Mother Ceres, and swaying up and down with the water bubbles.

But when the mother asked whether her poor lost child had stopped to drink of the fountain, the nymph with weeping eyes would answer 'No,' in a murmuring voice which was just like the sound of a running stream.

Often, too, she met fauns. These were little people with brown faces who looked as if they had played a great deal in the sun. They had hairy ears and little horns on their brows, and their legs were like goats' legs on which they danced merrily about the woods and fields. They

were very kind creatures, and were very sorry for Mother Ceres when they heard that her daughter was lost.

And once she met a rude band of satyrs who had faces like monkeys and who had horses' tails behind: they were dancing and shouting in a rough, noisy manner, and they only laughed when Ceres told them how unhappy she was.

One day while she was crossing a lonely sheep-field she saw the god Pan: he was sitting at the foot of a tall rock, making music on a shepherd's flute. He too, had horns on his brow, and hairy ears, and goat's feet. He knew Mother Ceres and answered her questions kindly, and he gave her some milk and honey to drink out of a wooden bowl. But he knew nothing of Proserpina.

And so Mother Ceres went wandering about for nine long days and nights. Now and then she found a withered

flower, and these she picked up and put in her bosom, because she fancied they might have fallen from her daughter's hand. All day she went on through the hot sunshine, and at night the flame of her torch would gleam on the pathway, and she would continue her weary search without ever sitting down to rest.

On the tenth day she came to the mouth of a cave. It was dark inside, but a torch was burning dimly and lit up half of the gloomy place. Ceres peeped in and held up her own torch before her, and then she saw what looked like a woman, sitting on a heap of withered leaves, which the wind had blown into the cave. She was a very strange-looking woman: her head was shaped like a dog's, and round it she had a wreath of snakes.

As soon as she saw her, Mother Ceres knew that this was a queer kind of person who was always grumbling and unhappy.

Her name was Hecate, and she would never say a word to other people unless they were unhappy too. 'I am sad enough,' thought poor Ceres, 'to talk with Hecate': so she stepped into the cave and sat down on the withered leaves beside the dog-headed woman.

'O Hecate,' she said, 'if ever you lose a daughter you will know what sorrow is. Tell me, for pity's sake, have you seen my poor child Proserpina pass by the mouth of your cave?'

'No, Mother Ceres,' answered Hecate. 'I have seen nothing of your daughter. But my ears, you know, are made so that all cries of distress or fright all over the world are heard by them. And nine days ago, as I sat in my cave, I heard the voice of a young girl sobbing as if in great distress: as well as I could judge, some dragon was carrying her away.'

'You kill me by saying so,' cried Mother Ceres, almost ready to faint: 'where was the sound, and which way did it seem to go?'

'It passed along very quickly,' said Hecate, 'and there was a rumbling of wheels to the eastward: I cannot tell you any more. I advise you just to come and live here with me, and we will be the two most unhappy women in all the world.'

'Not yet, dark Hecate,' replied Ceres. 'Will you first come with your torch and help me to seek for my child. When there is no more hope of finding her, then I will come back with you to your dark cave. But till I know that Proserpina is dead, I will not allow myself time to sorrow.'

Hecate did not much like the idea of going abroad into the sunshine, but at last she agreed to go, and they set out together, each carrying a torch, although it was broad daylight and the sun was

shining. Any people they met ran away without waiting to be spoken to, as soon as they caught sight of Hecate's wreath of snakes.

As the sad pair wandered on, a thought struck Ceres. 'There is one person,' she exclaimed, 'who must have seen my child and can tell me what has become of her. Why did I not think of him sooner? It is Phœbus.'

'What!' said Hecate, 'the youth that always sits in the sunshine! Oh! pray do not think of going near him: he is a gay young fellow that will only smile in your face. And, besides, there is such a glare of sunshine about him that he will quite blind my poor eyes, which are weak with so much weeping.'

'You have promised to be my companion,' answered Ceres. 'Come, let us make haste, or the sunshine will be gone and Phœbus along with it.'

So they set off in search of Phœbus, both sighing a great deal, and after a long journey they came to the sunniest spot in the whole world. There they saw a young man with curly golden hair which seemed to be made of sunbeams.

His clothes were like light summer clouds, and the smile on his face was so bright that Hecate held her hands before her eyes and muttered that she wished he would wear a veil! Phœbus had a lyre in his hands and was playing very sweet music, at the same time singing a merry song.

As Ceres and her dismal companion came near, Phœbus smiled on them so cheerfully that Hecate's wreath of snakes gave a spiteful hiss and Hecate wished she was back in her dark cave.

But Ceres was too unhappy to know whether Phœbus smiled or looked angry.

'Phœbus,' she said, 'I am in great

trouble and have come to you for help. Can you tell me what has become of my little daughter Proserpina?'

'Proserpina, Proserpina did you call her?' answered Phœbus, trying to remember. He had so many pleasant ideas in his head that he sometimes forgot what had happened no longer ago than yesterday.

'Ah yes! I remember now—a very lovely little girl. I am happy to tell you that I did see Proserpina not many days ago. You may be quite easy about her. She is safe and in good hands.'

'Oh, where is my dear child?' cried Ceres, clasping her hands and flinging herself at his feet. 'Why,' replied Phœbus, 'as the little girl was gathering flowers she was snatched up by King Pluto and carried off to his kingdom. I have never been there myself, but I am told the royal palace is splendidly built.

Proserpina will have gold and silver and diamonds to play with, and I am sure even although there is no sunshine, she will have a very happy life.'

'Hush! do not say such a thing,' said Ceres. 'What has she got to love? What are all these splendours if she has no one to care for? I must have her back: good Phœbus, will you come with me to demand my daughter from this wicked Pluto?'

'Pray excuse me,' answered Phœbus, with a bow. 'I certainly wish you success, and I am sorry I am too busy to go with you. Besides, King Pluto does not care much for me. To tell you the truth, his dog with the three heads would never let me pass the gateway. I always carry a handful of sunbeams with me, and those, you know, are not allowed within King Pluto's kingdom.'

So the poor mother said good-bye

and hastened away along with Hecate.

Ceres had now found out what had become of her daughter, but she was not any happier than before. Indeed, her trouble seemed worse than ever. So long as Proserpina was above ground there was some hope of getting her home again. But now that the poor child was shut up behind King Pluto's iron gates, with the three-headed Cerberus on guard beside them, there seemed no hope of her escape.

The dismal Hecate, who always looked on the darkest side of things, told Ceres she had better come back with her to the cave and spend the rest of her life in being miserable. But Ceres answered that Hecate could go back if she wished, but that for her part she would wander about all the world looking for the entrance to King Pluto's kingdom. So Hecate hurried off alone to her beloved

cave, frightening a great many little children with her dog's face as she went.

Poor Mother Ceres! It is sad to think of her all alone, holding up her never-dying torch and wandering up and down the wide, wide world. So much did she suffer that in a very short time she began to look quite old. She wandered about with her hair hanging down her back, and she looked so wild that people took her for some poor mad woman, and never thought that this was Mother Ceres who took care of every seed which was sown in the ground and of all the fruit and flowers.

Now she gave herself no trouble about seed-time or harvest: there was nothing in which she seemed to feel any interest, except the children she saw at play or gathering flowers by the wayside. Then, indeed, she would stand and look at them with tears in her eyes.

And the children seemed to understand her sorrow and would gather in a little group about her knees and look up lovingly into her face, and Ceres, after giving them a kiss all round, would lead them home and advise their mothers never to let them stray out of sight. 'For if they do,' said she, 'it may happen to you as it has happened to me: the iron-hearted King Pluto may take a liking to your darlings and carry them away in his golden chariot.'

At last, in her despair, Ceres made up her mind that not a stalk of grain, nor a blade of grass, nor a potato, nor a turnip, nor any vegetable that is good for man or beast, should be allowed to grow till her daughter was sent back. She was so unhappy that she even forbade the flowers to bloom.

Now you can see what a terrible misfortune had fallen on the earth. The

farmer ploughed the ground and planted his seed, as usual, and there lay the black earth without a single green blade to be seen. The fields looked as brown in the sunny months of spring as ever they did in winter. The rich man's garden and the flower-plot in front of the labourer's cottage were both empty; even the children's gardens showed nothing but withered stalks. It was very sad to see the poor starving sheep and cattle that followed behind Ceres, bleating and lowing as if they knew that she could help them.

All the people begged her at least to let the grass grow, but Mother Ceres was too miserable to care for any one's trouble. 'Never,' she said. 'If the earth is ever to be green again, it must grow along the path by which my daughter comes back to me.'

At last, as there seemed to be no other way out of it, Mercury, the favour-

ite messenger of the gods, was sent to King Pluto in the hope that he would set everything right again by giving up Proserpina.

Mercury went as quickly as he could to the great iron gates, and with the help of the wings on his shoes, he took a flying leap right over Cerberus with his three heads, and very soon he stood at the door of King Pluto's palace.

The servants all knew him, as he had often been there in his short cloak, and cap, and shoes with the wings, and with his curious staff which had two snakes twisted round it.

He asked to see the King immediately, and Pluto, who had heard his voice from the top of the stairs, called out to him to come up at once, for he was always glad to listen to Mercury's cheery talk.

And while they are laughing together

we must find out what Proserpina had been doing since we last heard about her.

You will remember that Proserpina had said she would not taste food so long as she was kept a prisoner in King Pluto's palace.

It was now six months since she had been carried off from her home, and not a mouthful had she eaten, not even when the cook had made all kinds of sweet things and had ordered all the dainties which children usually like best.

Proserpina was naturally a bright, merry little girl, and all this time she was not so unhappy as you may have thought.

In the big palace were a thousand rooms, and each was full of wonderful and beautiful things. It is true there was never any sunshine in these rooms, and Proserpina used to fancy that the shadowy light which came from the jewelled lamps was alive: it seemed to float before

her as she walked between the golden pillars, and to close softly behind her in the echo of her footsteps.

And Proserpina knew that all the glitter of these precious stones was not worth a single sunbeam, nor could the rubies and emeralds which she played with ever be as dear to her as the daisies and buttercups she had gathered among the soft green grass.

King Pluto felt how much happier his palace was since Proserpina came, and so did all his servants. They loved to hear her childish voice laughing as she ran from room to room, and they felt less old and tired when they saw again how glad little children can be.

'My own little Proserpina,' King Pluto used to say, 'I wish you would like me a little better. Although I look rather a sad man, I am really fond of children, and if you would stay here with me

always, it would make me happier than having hundreds of palaces like this.'

'Ah,' said Proserpina, 'you should have tried to make me like you first before carrying me off, and now the best thing you can do is to let me go again: then I might remember you sometimes and think that you were as kind as you knew how to be. Perhaps I might come back to pay you a visit one day.'

'No, no,' answered Pluto, with his gloomy smile, 'I will not trust you for that. You are too fond of living in the sunshine and gathering flowers. What an idle, childish thing to do! Do you not think that these diamonds which I have had dug out of the mine for you are far prettier than violets?'

'No, oh no! not half so pretty,' said Proserpina, snatching them from Pluto's hand, and flinging them to the other end of the room. 'O my sweet purple violets,

shall I ever see you again?' and she began to cry bitterly.

But like most children, she soon stopped crying, and in a short time she was running up and down the rooms as merrily as when she had played on the sands with the sea-children. And King Pluto, sad and lonely, watched her and wished that he too was a child, and when Proserpina turned and saw the great King standing alone in his splendid hall, so grand and so lonely, with no one to love him, she felt sorry for him. She ran back and for the first time in all those six months she put her small hand in his. 'I love you a little,' she whispered, looking up into his face.

'Do you really, dear child?' cried Pluto, bending down his dark face to kiss her. But Proserpina was a little afraid, he was so dark and severe-looking, and she shrank back.

'Well,' said Pluto, 'it is just what I deserve after keeping you a prisoner all these months, and starving you besides. Are you not dreadfully hungry, is there nothing I can get you to eat?'

In asking this Pluto was very cunning, as you will remember that if Proserpina once tasted any food in his kingdom, she would never again be able to go home.

'No, indeed,' said Proserpina. 'Your poor fat little cook is always making me all kinds of good things which I do not want. The one thing I should like to eat would be a slice of bread baked by my own mother, and a pear out of her garden.'

When Pluto heard this he began to see that he had made a mistake in his way of trying to tempt Proserpina to eat. He wondered why he had never thought of this before, and he at once sent a servant

with a large basket to get some of the finest and juiciest pears in the whole world.

But this was just at the time when, as we know, Mother Ceres in her despair had forbidden any flowers or fruit to grow on the earth, and the only thing King Pluto's servant could find, after seeking all over the world was a single dried-up pomegranate, so dried up as to be hardly worth eating. Still, since there was no better to be had, he brought it back to the palace, put it on a magnificent gold plate, and carried it to Proserpina.

Now it just happened that as the servant was bringing the pomegranate in at the back door of the palace, Mercury had gone up the front steps with his message to King Pluto about Proserpina.

As soon as Proserpina saw the pomegranate on the golden plate, she told the servant to take it away again. 'I shall not

touch it, I can assure you,' she said. 'If I were ever so hungry, I should not think of eating such a dried-up miserable pomegranate as that.'

'It is the only one in the world,' said the servant, and he set down the plate and went away.

When he had gone, Proserpina could not help coming close to the table and looking at the dried-up pomegranate with eagerness. To tell the truth, when she saw something that really suited her taste, she felt all her six months' hunger come back at once.

To be sure it was a very poor-looking pomegranate, with no more juice in it than in an oyster-shell. But there was no choice of such things in King Pluto's palace, and this was the first fresh fruit Proserpina had ever seen there, and the last she was ever likely to see: and unless she ate it up at once, it would only get

drier and drier and be quite unfit to eat.

'At least I may smell it,' she thought, so she took up the pomegranate and held it to her nose, and somehow, being quite near to her mouth, the fruit found its way into that little red cave.

Before Proserpina knew what she was about, her teeth had actually bitten it of their own accord.

Just as this fatal deed was done, the door of the hall opened and King Pluto came in, followed by Mercury, who had been begging him to let his little prisoner go.

At the first noise of their coming, Proserpina took the pomegranate from her mouth.

Mercury, who saw things very quickly, noticed that Proserpina looked a little uncomfortable, and when he saw the gold plate empty, he was sure she had been eating something.




SO SHE TOOK UP THE POMEGRANATE AND APPLIED IT TO HER NOSE.

As for King Pluto, he never guessed the secret.

'My dear little Proserpina,' said the King, sitting down and drawing her gently between his knees, 'here is Mercury, who tells me that a great many sad things have happened to innocent people because I have kept you a prisoner down here. And to confess the truth I have been thinking myself that I really had no right to take you away from your mother. It was very stupid of me, but I thought this palace was so dull, and that I should be much happier if I just had a merry little girl to play in it, and I hoped you would take my crown for a toy and let me be your playmate. It was very foolish of me, I know.'

'No, it was not foolish,' said Proserpina, 'you have been very kind to me, and I have often been quite happy here with you.'

'Thank you, dear,' said King Pluto, 'but I cannot help seeing that you think my palace a dark prison and me the hard-hearted jailer, and I should, indeed, be hard-hearted if I were to keep you longer than six months. So I give you your liberty: go back, dear, with Mercury, to your mother.'

Now, although you might not think so, Proserpina found it impossible to say good-bye to King Pluto without being sorry, and she felt she ought to tell him about tasting the pomegranate. She even cried a little when she thought how lonely and dull the great palace with its jewelled lamps would be after she had left.

She would like to have thanked him many times, but Mercury hurried her away. 'Come along quickly,' he said, 'as King Pluto may change his mind, and take care above all things that you say

nothing about the pomegranate which the servant brought you on the gold plate.'

In a short time they had passed the great gateway with the golden pillars, leaving Cerberus barking and growling with all his three heads at once, and beating his dragon tail on the ground. Along the dark, rocky road they went very quickly, and soon they reached the upper world again.

You can guess how excited and happy Proserpina was to see the bright sunshine. She noticed how green the grass grew on the path behind and on each side of her. Wherever she set her foot at once there rose a flower: violets and roses bloomed along the wayside: the grass and the corn began to grow with ten times their usual quickness to make up for the dreary months when Mother Ceres had forbidden them to appear

above ground.

The hungry cattle began to eat, and went on eating all day after their long fast. And, I can assure you, it was a busy time with all the farmers when they found that summer was coming with a rush.

As to the birds, they hopped about from tree to tree among the fresh, sweet blossoms, and sang for joy that the dreary days were over and the world was green and young again.

Mother Ceres had gone back to her empty cottage, and was sitting very sadly on the doorstep with her burning torch in her hand. She had been looking wearily at the flame for some moments, when all at once it flickered and went out.

'What does this mean?' she thought. 'It was a magic torch, and should have gone on burning till Proserpina was found.'

She looked up, and was surprised to see the bare brown fields suddenly turning green, just as you sometimes see them turn golden when the sun comes from behind a dark cloud.

'Does the Earth dare to disobey me?' exclaimed Mother Ceres angrily. 'Did I not forbid it to be green until my child should be sent back to me?'

'Then open your arms, mother dear,' cried a well-known voice, 'and take me back again.' And Proserpina came running along the pathway and flung herself on her mother's bosom.

It would be impossible to tell how happy they were; so happy that they cried a little: for people cry when they are very glad as well as when they are unhappy.

After a little while Mother Ceres looked anxiously at Proserpina. 'My child,' she said, 'did you taste any food while you were in King Pluto's palace?'

'Dearest mother,' answered Proserpina, 'I will tell you the whole truth. Until this morning not a morsel of food had passed my lips. But a servant brought me a pomegranate on a golden plate, a very dry pomegranate, with no juice inside, nothing but seeds and skin: and I was so hungry, and had not tasted any food for such a long time, that I took just one bite. The moment I tasted it King Pluto and Mercury came into the room. I had not swallowed a morsel, but O mother! I hope it was no harm, six pomegranate seeds remained in my mouth and I swallowed them.'

'O miserable me!' said Mother Ceres. 'For each of these six pomegranate seeds you must spend a month every year in King Pluto's palace. You are only half restored to me: you will be six months with me and then six months with the King of Darkness!

'Do not be so vexed, mother dear,' said Proserpina. 'It was very unkind of King Pluto to carry me off, but then, as he says, it was such a dismal life for him to lead in that great palace all alone: and he says he has been much happier since he had me to run about the big rooms and to play beside him. If only he will let me spend six months every year with you, I think I can bear to spend the other six months beside him. After all, he was as kind as he knew how to be, but I am very glad he cannot keep me the whole year round.'

# CHAPTER 5
# Midas

Once upon a time there lived a very rich King whose name was Midas, and he had a little daughter whom he loved very dearly. This King was fonder of gold than of anything else in the whole world: or if he did love anything better, it was the one little daughter who played so merrily beside her father's footstool.

But the more Midas loved his daughter, the more he wished to be rich for her sake. He thought, foolish man, that the best thing he could do for his child was to leave her the biggest pile of yellow glittering gold that had ever been heaped together since the world began. So he

gave all his thoughts and all his time to this purpose.

When he worked in his garden, he used to wish that the roses had leaves made of gold: and once when his little daughter brought him a handful of yellow buttercups, he exclaimed, 'Now if these had only been real gold they would have been worth gathering.' He very soon forgot how beautiful the flowers, and the grass, and the trees were, and at the time my story begins Midas could scarcely bear to see or to touch anything that was not made of gold.

Every day he used to spend a great many hours in a dark, ugly room underground: it was here that he kept all his money, and whenever Midas wanted to be very happy he would lock himself into this miserable room and would spend hours and hours pouring the glittering coins out of his money-bags. Or he would

count again and again the bars of gold which were kept in a big oak chest with a great iron lock in the lid, and sometimes he would carry a boxful of gold dust from the dark corner where it lay, and would look at the shining heap by the light that came from a tiny window.

To his greedy eyes there never seemed to be half enough; he was quite discontented. 'What a happy man I should be,' he said one day, 'if only the whole world could be made of gold, and if it all belonged to me!'

Just then a shadow fell across the golden pile, and when Midas looked up he saw a young man with a cheery rosy face standing in the thin strip of sunshine that came through the little window. Midas was certain that he had carefully locked the door before he opened his money-bags, so he knew that no one, unless he were more than a mortal, could

get in beside him. The stranger seemed so friendly and pleasant that Midas was not in the least afraid.

'You are a rich man, friend Midas,' the visitor said; 'I doubt if any other room in the whole world has as much gold in it as this.'

'Maybe,' said Midas in a discontented voice, 'but I wish it were much more: and think how many years it has taken me to gather it all! If only I could live for a thousand years, then I might be really rich.'

'Then you are not satisfied?' asked the stranger. Midas shook his head.

'What would satisfy you?' the stranger said.

Midas looked at his visitor for a minute, and then said, 'I am tired of getting money with so much trouble. I should like everything I touch to be changed into gold.'

The stranger smiled, and his smile seemed to fill the room like a flood of sunshine. 'Are you quite sure, Midas, that you would never be sorry if your wish were granted?' he asked.

'Quite sure,' said Midas: 'I ask nothing more to make me perfectly happy.'

'Be it as you wish, then,' said the stranger: 'from tomorrow at sunrise you will have your desire—everything you touch will be changed into gold.'

The figure of the stranger then grew brighter and brighter, so that Midas had to close his eyes, and when he opened them again he saw only a yellow sunbeam in the room, and all around him glittered the precious gold which he had spent his life in gathering.

How Midas longed for the next day to come! He scarcely slept that night, and as soon as it was light he laid his hand on the chair beside his bed: then he

nearly cried when he saw that nothing happened: the chair remained just as it was. 'Could the stranger have made a mistake,' he wondered, 'or had it been a dream?'

He lay still getting angrier and angrier each minute until at last the sun rose, and the first rays shone through his window and brightened the room. It seemed to Midas that the bright yellow sunbeam was reflected very curiously from the covering of his bed, and he sat up and looked more closely.

What was his delight when he saw that the bedcover on which his hands rested had become a woven cloth of the purest and brightest gold! He started up and caught hold of the bed-post: instantly it became a golden pillar. He pulled aside the window-curtain and the tassel grew heavy in his hand: it was a mass of gold! He took up a book from the

table, and at his first touch it became a bundle of thin golden leaves, in which no reading could be seen.

Midas was delighted with his good fortune: he took his spectacles from his pocket and put them on, so that he might see more distinctly what he was about. But to his surprise he could not possibly see through them: the clear glasses had turned into gold, and, of course, though they were worth a great deal of money, they were of no more use as spectacles.

Midas thought this was rather troublesome, but he soon forgot all about it. He went downstairs, and how he laughed with pleasure when he noticed that the railing became a bar of shining gold as he rested his hand on it: even the rusty iron latch of the garden door turned yellow as soon as his fingers pressed it.

How lovely the garden was! In the old days Midas had been very fond of

flowers, and had spent a great deal of money in getting rare trees and flowers with which to make his garden beautiful.

Red roses in full bloom scented the air: purple and white violets nestled under the rose-bushes, and birds were singing happily in the cherry-trees, which were covered with snow-white blossoms. But since Midas had become so fond of gold he had lost all pleasure in his garden: this morning he did not even see how beautiful it was.

He was thinking of nothing but the wonderful gift the stranger had brought him, and he was sure he could make the garden of far more value than it had ever been. So he went from bush to bush and touched the flowers. And the beautiful pink and red colour faded from the roses: the violets became stiff, and then glittered among bunches of hard yellow leaves: and showers of snow-white

blossoms no longer fell from the cherry-trees; the tiny petals were all changed into flakes of solid gold, which glittered so brightly in the sunbeams that Midas could not bear to look at them.

But he was quite satisfied with his morning's work, and went back to the palace for breakfast feeling very happy.

Just then he heard his little daughter crying bitterly, and she came running into the room sobbing as if her heart would break. 'How now, little lady,' he said, 'pray what is the matter with you this morning?'

'Oh dear, oh dear, such a dreadful thing has happened!' answered the child. 'I went to the garden to gather you some roses, and they are all spoiled: they have grown quite ugly, and stiff, and yellow, and they have no scent: what can be the matter?' and she cried bitterly.

Midas was ashamed to confess that

he was to blame, so he said nothing, and they sat down at the table. The King was very hungry, and he poured out a cup of coffee and helped himself to some fish: but the instant his lips touched the coffee it became the colour of gold, and the next moment it hardened into a solid lump. 'Oh dear me!' exclaimed the King, rather surprised.

'What is the matter, father?' asked his little daughter.

'Nothing, child, nothing,' he answered; 'eat your bread and milk before it gets cold.'

Then he looked at the nice little fish on his plate, and he gently touched its tail with his finger. To his horror it was at once changed into gold. He took one of the delicious hot cakes, and he had scarcely broken it when the white flour changed into yellow crumbs which shone like grains of hard sea-sand.

'I do not see how I am going to get any breakfast,' he said to himself: and he looked with envy at his little daughter, who had dried her tears and was eating her bread and milk hungrily. 'I wonder if it will be the same at dinner,' he thought, 'and if so, how am I going to live if all my food is to be turned into gold?'

Midas began to get very anxious and to think about many things that he had never thought of before. Here was the very richest breakfast that could be set before a King, and yet there was nothing that he could eat! The poorest workman sitting down to a crust of bread and a cup of water was better off than King Midas, whose dainty food was worth its weight in gold.

He began to doubt whether, after all, riches were the only good thing in the world, and he was so hungry that he gave a groan.

His little daughter noticed that her father ate nothing, and at first she sat still looking at him and trying to find out what was the matter. Then she got down from her chair, and running to her father, she threw her arms lovingly round his knees.

Midas bent down and kissed her: he felt that his little daughter's love was a thousand times more precious than all the gold he had gained since the stranger came to visit him. 'My precious, precious little girl!' he said, but there was no answer.

Alas! what had he done? The moment that his lips had touched his child's forehead, a change took place. Her sweet, rosy face so full of love and happiness, hardened and became a glittering yellow colour: her beautiful brown curls hung like wires of gold from the small head: and her soft, tender little figure

grew stiff in his arms.

Midas had often said to people that his little daughter was worth her weight in gold, and it had become really true: now when it was too late, he felt how much more precious was the warm tender heart that loved him than all the gold that could be piled up between the earth and sky.

He began to wring his hands and to wish that he was the poorest man in the wide world, if the loss of all his money might bring back the rosy colour to his dear child's face.

While he was in despair he suddenly saw a stranger standing near the door, the same visitor he had seen yesterday for the first time in his treasure-room, and who had granted his wish.

'Well, friend Midas,' he said, 'pray how are you enjoying your new power?'

Midas shook his head. 'I am very

miserable,' he said.

'Very miserable, are you?' exclaimed the stranger. 'And how does that happen: have I not faithfully kept my promise; have you not everything that your heart desired?'

'Gold is not everything,' answered Midas, 'and I have lost all that my heart really cared for.'

'Ah!' said the stranger, 'I see you have made some discoveries since yesterday. Tell me truly, which of these things do you really think is most worth—a cup of clear cold water and a crust of bread, or the power of turning everything you touch into gold; your own little daughter, alive and loving, or that solid statue of a child which would be valued at thousands of pounds?'

'O my child, my child!' sobbed Midas, wringing his hands. 'I would not have given one of her curls for the power

of changing all the world into gold, and I would give all I possess for a cup of cold water and a crust of bread.'

'You are wiser than you were, King Midas,' said the stranger. 'Tell me, do you really wish to get rid of your fatal gift?'

'Yes,' said Midas, 'it is hateful to me.'

'Go, then,' said the stranger, 'and plunge into the river that flows at the bottom of the garden: take also a pitcher of the same water, and sprinkle it over anything that you wish to change back again from gold to its former substance.'

King Midas bowed low, and when he lifted his head the stranger was nowhere to be seen.

You will easily believe that King Midas lost no time in getting a big pitcher, then he ran towards the river. On reaching the water he jumped in without even waiting to take off his

shoes. 'How delightful!' he said, as he came out with his hair all dripping: 'this is really a most refreshing bath, and surely it must have washed away the magic gift.

Then he dipped the pitcher in to the water, and how glad he was to see that it became just a common earthen pitcher and not a golden one as it had been five minutes before! He was conscious, also, of a change in himself: a cold, heavy weight seemed to have gone, and he felt light, and happy, and human once more. Maybe his heart had been changing into gold too, though he could not see it, and now it had softened again and become gentle and kind.

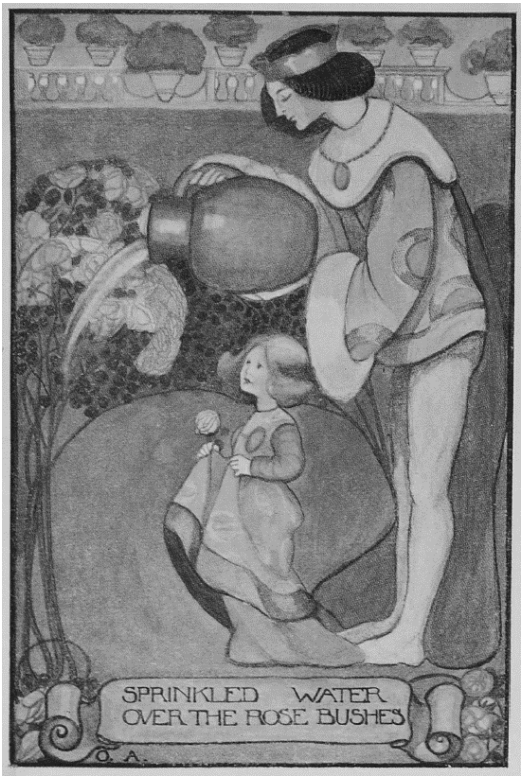
Midas hurried back to the palace with the pitcher of water, and the first thing he did was to sprinkle it by handfuls all over the golden figure of his little daughter. You would have laughed to see

how the rosy colour came back to her cheeks, and how she began to sneeze and choke; and how surprised she was to find herself dripping wet and her father still throwing water over her.

You see she did not know that she had been a little golden statue, for she could not remember anything from the moment when she ran to kiss her father.

King Midas then led his daughter into the garden, where he sprinkled all the rest of the water over the rose-bushes, and the grass, and the trees: and in a minute they were blooming as freshly as ever, and the air was laden with the scent of the flowers.

There were two things left, which, as long as he lived, used to remind King Midas of the stranger's fatal gift. One was that the sands at the bottom of the river always sparkled like grains of gold: and the other, that his little daughter's curls


SPRINKLED WATER
OVER THE ROSE BUSHES
O. A.

were no longer brown. They had a golden tinge which had not been there before that miserable day when he had received the fatal gift, and when his kiss had changed them into gold.