

*HERR LAZARUS AND THE DRAKEN*

ONCE upon a time there was a cobbler called Lazarus, who was very fond of honey. One day, as he ate some while he sat at work, the flies collected in such numbers that with one blow he killed forty. Then he went and ordered a sword to be made for him, on which he had written these words : ' With one blow I have slain forty.' When the sword was ready he took it and went out into the world, and when he was two days' journey from home he came to a spring, by which he laid himself down and slept.

Now in that country there dwelt Draken, one of whom came to the spring to draw water ; there he found Lazarus sleeping, and read what was written on his sword. Then he went back to his people and told them what he had seen, and they all advised him to make fellowship with this powerful stranger. So the Draken returned to the spring, awoke Lazarus, and said that if it was agreeable to him they should make fellowship together.

Lazarus answered that he was willing, and after a priest had blessed the fellowship, they returned together to the other Draken, and Lazarus dwelt among them. After some days they told him that it was their custom to take it in turns to bring wood and water, and as he was now of their company, he must take his turn. They went first for water and wood, but at last it came to be Lazarus's turn to go for water. The Draken had a great leathern bag, holding two hundred measures of

water. This Lazarus could only, with great difficulty, drag empty to the spring, and because he could not carry it back full, he did not fill it at all, but, instead, he dug up the ground all round the spring.

As Lazarus remained so long away, the Draken sent



one of their number to see what had become of him, and when this one came to the spring, Lazarus said to him : ‘ We will no more plague ourselves by carrying water every day. I will bring the entire spring home at once, and so we shall be freed from this burden.’

But the Draken called out: 'On no account, Herr Lazarus, else we shall all die of thirst; rather will we carry the water ourselves in turns, and you alone shall be exempt.'

Next it comes to be Lazarus's turn to bring the wood. Now the Draken, when they fetched the wood, always took an entire tree on their shoulder, and so carried it home. Because Lazarus could not imitate them in this, he went to the forest, tied all the trees together with a thick rope, and remained in the forest till evening. Again the Draken sent one of them after him to see what had become of him, and when this one asked what he was about, Lazarus answered: 'I will bring the entire forest home at once, so that after that we may have rest.'

But the Draken called out: 'By no means, Herr Lazarus, else we shall all die of cold; rather will we go ourselves to bring wood, and let you be free.' And then the Draken tore up one tree, threw it over his shoulder, and so carried it home.

When they had lived together some time, the Draken became weary of Lazarus, and agreed among themselves to kill him; each Draken, in the night while Lazarus slept, should strike him a blow with a hatchet. But Lazarus heard of this scheme, and when the evening came, he took a log of wood, covered it with his cloak, laid it in the place where he usually slept, and then hid himself. In the night the Draken came, and each one hit the log a blow with his hatchet, till it flew in pieces.

Then they believed their object was gained, and they lay down again.

Thereupon Lazarus took the log, threw it away, and laid himself down in its stead. Towards dawn, he began to groan, and when the Draken heard that, they asked what ailed him, to which he made answer: 'The gnats have stung me horribly.'

This terrified the Draken, for they believed that Lazarus took their blows for gnat-stings, and they determined at any price to get rid of him. Next morning, therefore, they asked him if he had not wife or child, and said that if he would like to go and visit them they would give him a bag of gold to take away with him. He agreed willingly to this, but asked further that one of the Draken should go with him to carry the bag of gold. They consented, and one was sent with him.

When they had come to within a short distance of Lazarus's house, he said to the Draken: 'Stop here, in the meantime, for I must go on in front and tie up my children, lest they eat you.'

So he went and tied his children with strong ropes, and said to them: 'As soon as the Draken comes in sight, call out as loud as you can, "Drakenflesh! Drakenflesh!"'

So, when the Draken appeared, the children cried out: 'Drakenflesh! Drakenflesh!' and this so terrified the Draken that he let the bag fall and fled.

On the road he met a fox, which asked him why he seemed so frightened. He answered that he was afraid of the children of Herr Lazarus, who had been within a hair-breadth of eating him up.

But the fox laughed, and said: 'What! you were afraid of the children of Herr Lazarus? He had two fowls, one of which I ate yesterday, the other I will go and fetch now—if you do not believe me, come and see for yourself; but you must first tie yourself on to my tail.'

The Draken then tied himself on to the fox's tail, and went back thus with it to Lazarus's house, in order to see what it would arrange. There stood Lazarus with his gun raised ready to fire, who, when he saw the fox coming along with the Draken, called out to the fox: 'Did I not tell you to bring me all the Draken, and you bring me only one?'

When the Draken heard that he made off to the right-

about at once, and ran so fast that the fox was dashed in pieces against the stones.

When Lazarus had got quit of the Draken he built himself, with their gold, a magnificent house, in which he spent the rest of his days in great enjoyment.